

*THE REAL
LLOYD GEORGE*


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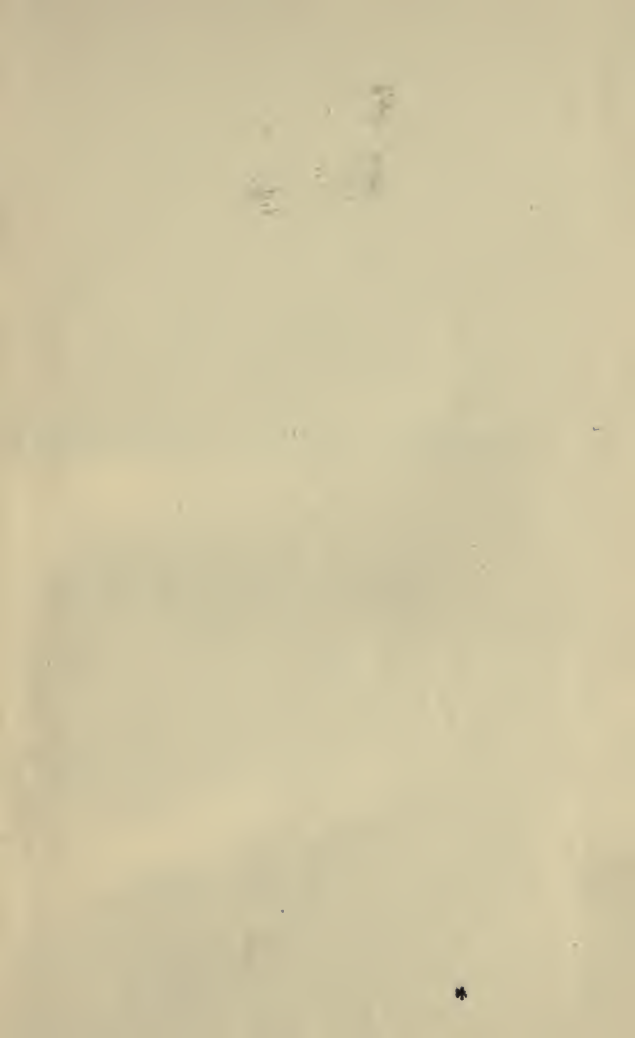
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THE REAL LLOYD GEORGE



THE REAL LLOYD GEORGE

BY

G. E. RAINE

TWENTY-FIRST THOUSAND



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THE REAL LLOYD GEORGE

CHAPTER I

A MAN OF EMOTIONS BUT FEW PRINCIPLES

MR. LLOYD GEORGE is one of the most dramatic figures that has ever taken the stage of British politics. All eyes are on him all the time. No whisper from him is missed.

We were at war. At the hands of a little nation the greatest Empire was sustaining astounding reverses. Our famous generals were being beaten by farmers. The blood of our fighting-men was flowing in rivers. Each day brought its awful casualty lists and fresh horrors of defeat and capture. Our people staggered under amazement and dismay. Men moved with set faces under a black cloud.

And then . . . from the back of the stage there rushed forward a man who actually blessed our enemies, and helped them against us ; a man who made speeches in praise of the men whose rifles were bringing misery to every street.

That was the coming of Mr. Lloyd George.

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And that was the coming of a politician—a man who can only live by popular favour.

When the curtain rang down on that first act, no one can have imagined that the enemy of our nation would ever become the idol of our people.

Mr. Lloyd George in his part of pro-Boer achieved two successes. He was hated, and, above all, he was hated universally—save in parts of Wales and Ireland. He moved in a sea of limelight. His name was a byeword; but it was on all lips. No man with a fist clenched but watched his movements for a chance to get at him. There is a hint for public men in this. If you cannot make sure of being popular, take care to be loathed,

And in this scandalous blaze of notoriety Mr. George actually laid the foundations of regard. It was seen that he did not merely enrage the people, but he faced them. His voice was drowned in the storm of hate, but the man himself was there—a single man, with arms outstretched, appealing to a nation. He certainly risked his very life for the cause he pleaded—or for himself. If that was a calculated act, it was a very clever one. Some put it down at that. Others believed that the man was in sheer earnest, and was staking his life against his message. At any rate, all came to admit that here was a man of fine courage.

He was wrong—of course he was outrageously wrong—but he played a man's part. While the people debated as to whether Mr. Lloyd George was a play-actor or a fanatic, the flood of limelight increased. One advantage had been gained. The man had proved his courage. There was no longer any shame in arguing for the honesty of his motives, although both disputants believed that they were loathsome to the point of being traitorous.

Perhaps one might state the people's estimate of Mr. George at this period as being—
“He is a fearless man. He is horribly wrong, but he honestly believes that he is right.”

First impressions are often the longest lived ; and when they are made in breathless minutes of suspense, they are burnt in on the brain.

At that time Mr. Lloyd George was a problem in personality with the British people. He first, dramatically, came before them as such. And they have looked upon him in that way ever since. The man has always come first. “Fearless, if wrong.” His motives have come second, and the verdict on them has varied. He championed the Boers against his own race. That was obviously wrong ; but it might easily have been honest. He produced “The People's Budget,” declared a class-war, and became the evangelist of the poor and immediately their idol. That, we hope, was

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honest ; but he certainly was not right. As we shall prove later, the poor have been paying for that ever since. But even then, in the hey-day of the budget's resounding favour, the man towered above his message. The cheers were for Lloyd George, just as the hisses are to-day. The budget itself was but the stalking-horse, just as was the Insurance Act.

The personality of the man has a challenge which has brought a whole nation to the salute. It is arresting and dominating. His motives have always had the virtue of being intensely arguable. The doubts which have hedged them in, and the controversies which have centred on them, have given the man the advertisement of an Academy problem-picture. But what about his methods ?

Between the acts of a play the spectators have time to think. Mr. Lloyd George, when on the stage, stifles thought with frenzy. He sweeps his audience with him. He has an uncanny grip on all the prejudices which men form to excuse their own failure or to belittle the success of others.

But when the curtain is down . . . ? What is there but the echo of lines spoken magnificently—words that burned. What but the memory of action which perplexed, and fascinated by its very perverseness ; which almost persuaded against better judgment ; what is

there left but these memories when the curtain comes down ?

There is still the situation—the impossible, intolerable situation.

The words were beautiful ; the acting was thrilling ; the motives were admirable ; the emotions were creditable to a degree ; but the mess is abominable.

After all, politicians, like pickle-merchants, are judged by what they put on the market, and not by their advertisements. The man, his motives, his emotions are all of secondary importance. They should never have dominated. His methods and the results are what count. If they are sound and successful they help ; if not, they hurt. We are sure that Mr. George has hurt us very much—all of us—and the poorest the most. It is important that we should see when and how, and put ourselves on guard.

In his recently published biography, Mr. Lloyd George's career is described as "an heroic progress as yet uncomplete." Much has happened since those words were written, and it may be that the prediction will be abruptly falsified. Whether that is so or not, Mr. George will never again be anything but a private Member of Parliament—always picturesque, and generally a nuisance—if only the nation will quietly take stock of his methods.

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We have had our Lloyd George in power ; let us see what he has cost us and what he has given for the money. This same admiring biographer blandly assures us: "His life and character attract first of all by their glitter, and next, on a closer view, by their qualities of solidity and substance." The glitter certainly is there, and it has always had the help of much limelight. "Glitter," however, is anything but a recommendation to those in need of a reliable public servant, and we turn with anxiety to find "the qualities of solidity and substance" which, after all, are the business.

We shall prove that in all Mr. Lloyd George's career there has not been a vestige of evidence of "solidity and substance." They have never been there, they are not there, and they never will be there. Mr. Lloyd George would never have achieved his notoriety had they been there. He came in dark, dull days with his "glitter," and we took him from his pedestal and put him in—an office. He might have been a Welsh bard, and we tried to make an administrator of him. We brought him from dreams to blue-books ; from rhetorical phrases to—figures. He is the Finance Minister of the world's greatest Empire, and he does not know the difference between an investment and a speculation. This unhappy man, who has been condemned to budget for a nation, is

such a stranger to forethought and finance, that he even buys shares for himself when he is unprepared to pay for them.

Of course he is a genius. That is incontestable. And that alone should have won for him less inconsiderate treatment. He is a genius, and so, of course, is Mr. Harry Lauder, and for the matter of that Mr. Danny Maher in his way. But the good Maher is only a genius on horseback, and would make a poor show indeed on the Treasury Bench. No one can successfully defynature. Leave Mr. Lauder behind his footlights, keep Mr. Maher on his racecourses, and do release Mr. Lloyd George for harmless and beautiful dreaming amongst his native mountains.

Mr. Lloyd George's career, with its dramatic success and its pitiable failure, is a condemnation of us, much more than it is of him.

Doubtless he has given us of his very best. The fault is not his. It so happens, however, that we have stumbled on an epoch of flare and glare. It is a time when noise counts. And he brought us noise, and "glitter" too. He merely happened to be the foremost of those who have applied to the serious pursuit of politics the methods of the advertising agent. And he sold his goods—once. He has now lost a market which he would never have gained had we been discreet buyers.

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There is no mystery about statesmanship. A great statesman is merely a supremely good business man operating on a gigantic scale. Recently a business firm took a politician into trade, and the Government, by way of encouragement, gave that politician a peerage. And that is as it should be, seeing that business men often get peerages when they go into politics. The connection between statesmanship and business is very close—very close indeed, just now. The only real distinction is in the matter of rewards. Business men take what they make, and statesmen—work for the country. At least, they did in the good old days, when we were *guileless* and *wireless*.

The relation between statesmanship and business is not a coincidence: it is a necessity. Ministers are heads of Departments manned by swarms of officials. The nation's business has to be done in each Department, just as private business must be done by each firm. If the Minister in charge is inefficient, the result is simply deplorable.

The ordinary Member of Parliament, moreover, is wholly incapable of doing his work unless he is a business man. In addition to his duties in the House, he has work on Committees which quickly tests his training and equipment. These are truths which hitherto seem to have escaped the consideration of the

electors. The M.P. is too often chosen because he is a good speaker, or because he has money and to spare—and does spare it. As a fact, rhetoric in Parliament is the last thing wanted, and spendthrifts in the constituencies are not necessarily sound economists in the House.

Mr. Lloyd George from first to last is nothing but a great speaker. He has a hawk's eye for a prejudice and no thought for a principle. He is luxuriously emotional and sterile of judgment. He is a mere opportunist. His policy is a web of catch-cries and phrases. He sets the fashion of a day—the day on which he speaks. He never looks back for the guidance of the past, nor ahead to escape the nemesis of the future.

Frankly, he is all emotions and no balance. His attempts at constructive work have been pitiable fiascos. So it was with the People's Budget and the Insurance Act, of which much hereafter. And so it would assuredly be with the Land Campaign if ever the chance came. Nowhere could one find a finer salesman; but as a producer or an administrator Mr. George is impossible.

He has not the aptitude for statesmanship, nor yet has he had the advantage of any training. He is wanting in patience, and, like every egotist, chafes at advice. If he enters on a difficult task, he believes that salvation

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is to be found in the gag and guillotine. He imagines that imperfections are remedied if only they are not discovered. It is difficult to regard him as a statesman at all. Statecraft is with him but a juggler's outfit. Politics are but an opportunity for self-revelation. The question is not, "What should be done?" The question always is, "What will *he* do?"

Genius of this type should be shunned like the plague. Certainly it cannot live under the same heaven with democratic government. It is autocracy gone mad. It is egotism blind and shrieking with a bludgeon in the hand.

Mr. George would have stopped the war at any stage on any terms. He sided with the Boers against the whole British nation. Had he happened to have been in power, he would have flouted the nation and stopped the war.

The Insurance Act is the egotist's last gift at our expense. Mr. Lloyd George decided in favour of National Insurance, and was good enough to determine who should be insured, how they should be insured, what they should be made to pay, and what benefits were best for them. He cheerfully did the nation's thinking, put his own ideas into statute form, drove the Bill through Parliament, and awaited a whirlwind of "God bless yous." When they did not come, he was

surprised, and sent emissaries through the land to "explain" the provisions of an Act which ought never to have been law unless it was first approved of by the people.

Such a man and such methods are obviously a peril to the community. Yet the outrage was inevitable. And with Mr. George, egotist and autocrat, in power, a similar experience may await us at any moment. Mr. George's genius is elementary and uncontrollable. It is inspired by a blind and unfaltering faith in Mr. George. The nation can no more bow him to its will than can the navigator direct the winds.

Are we to let this dreamer write up our statute book while we "tremble and obey?"

CHAPTER II

EFFICIENCY SACRIFICED FOR EFFECT

MR. LLOYD GEORGE is what he is largely because of what he was. He was born amidst poverty, and until he reached man's estate he was a poor lad amidst poor people. But poverty has had many another voice to plead for her from the high places, and that service alone would not have won eminence for an unknown man from Wales.

The distinction is, I think, this. Other men have appealed to the rich to help the poor. Mr. George pleaded direct with the poor to help themselves at the expense of the well-to-do.

Also, there is a quality in his oratory which his own past life has bestowed on him. Although he has left poverty behind him, his mental outlook and manner of expression are still those of the man in straitened circumstances. He is mentally incapable of taking any but the poor man's point of view. He is mentally incapable of using language other than what a poor man breaking into

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eloquence would employ. He has his eye on the crowd always, but he cannot help it. He has the mind and the soul of the crowd. For his party he is an invaluable editor of a popular edition of policy. On the platform he is a superb interpreter, and translates the meaningless, stilted periods of other leaders into words which hit home every time.

But these qualities have their defects, and those defects are fatal to statesmanship. Mr. George only excels with the crowd because he knows no other public. His outlook and range have been limited by the circumstances of his life. There is evidence to show that they are every whit as pitiably narrow to-day. A man has to set out early in life to walk beyond the barriers of his natural environment. Else they grow higher, and the lands without seem to be farther; and he himself becomes satisfied with the shadow that he knows.

Frankly, the effect of poverty on Mr. George's life has been disappointing. From a man of his magnetism one might have expected an appeal to the world's conscience instead of a crude and futile class-war. This, however, is a matter of method, and is solely traceable to the rigid setting of his early years. Environment hemmed him in then, and he has been content to be a king in his

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own kingdom rather than win a larger understanding through service in a bigger world.

But think of that early life in a Welsh village! What a parched land of ideas! We hear but little of books and less of thinkers. And those who had read a little, and probably talked much, were all of the same mould. Their religion came from the little chapel and all else was anathema. Their politics from one source—the same. Even the Christ of their narrow creed—one writes it with reverence—was shrouded in the Party Colours.

Against the pitiable littleness of that life, a man who had real bigness in him would have revolted. Young Lloyd George did nothing of the kind. He was foremost in parson-baiting, and ruled out all other doctrines but his own as the inventions of the devil. His politics he took without questioning from those about him. He never dreamt of thinking for himself in those days; and now he is anxious to prevent us from thinking either. We are to take his views and his laws just as he did. He became the mere mouthpiece and the intellectual serf of his uncle.

Of course he got talking early. He spoke in chapel and from the Radical platform, and probably delivered the same speeches in both places. In politics he was a hack and sought to catch the ear of influence by servile ortho-

doxy and excessive virulence. When he was most uncharitable he made a plentiful use of the Scriptures.

There are thousands of men in the Free Churches who have been doing the same thing for years. They are all Lloyd Georges without the touch of genius.

And that is the tragedy of it all. Mr. George indeed has genius—but he is a politician in a straight-waistcoat. He has no eyes to see anything but the sights that are familiar. He has no mind to range beyond habitual themes and the problems of the poor men amongst whom he lived. If his Bethels had been burnt ; if he had formed his own impressions, and better still had found the stimulus of great minds, he would have been a great man for all men. Instead of that, he has come with knowledge on a single line, and has gone down before the onset of lesser men with a wider outlook, and has been disowned by even his own people. That he should preach the class-war was the inevitable outcome of his upbringing. His politics, after all, were only prejudices. That he should fail in the class-war is a tribute to the greater sagacity of the crowd.

The crowd always distrusts a man who is a man of the crowd. Tradition still counts.

There is much that is profoundly unsatis-

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factory in the published account of his earlier years. We all know that in youth enthusiasm is at its highest. Insincerity and cynicism may or may not come later. We had expected to find in the early speeches of this evangelist of poverty a burning zeal and a message with a ring in it. There really seems to be no message at all. The speeches are merely the platform efforts of the hack tub-thumper, and the man who made them never seems to ask what was their effect on the movement. He is solely concerned with the impression he personally made, and every speech is voted good or bad according to its effect on his personal career.

There is only one word which describes the evidence on this point, and that is the word nauseating.

Here are some instances from the recent biography. The meetings were held in the year 1885 :

“Rough audience, had good hearing, spoke with much fire and impetuosity.”

Then again, on the 30th January, he announced the receipt of a letter from Mr. W. Jones, who said :

“That he had general praise of me amongst the workmen.”

Then on the 3rd February :

“However, it was not encouraging to get

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up after such a speech, especially as the audience marched away in troops during the proposal of my resolution speech. However, I got up, and, as A. J. Parry told me afterwards, immediately I had delivered two or three sentences, several who had started out sat down again and listened; in fact, so he said, I was better listened to than the majority of the speakers. Several congratulated me, especially A. J. P. He assures me that I will make an effective speaker."

Not a word, mind you, as to what he said, or the good that he hoped to attain, or even his hope that he had attained any good at all. He merely reports the limelight.

Again: "On March 28 spoke between 40 and 45 minutes, with much ease, and in the end with much fire."

April 26: "Local Option meeting at Port Medoc. Town Hall full. Mr. White from Manchester was there. I proposed the second resolution and got on fairly well, I think."

This modesty was short-lived, however. Mr. Lloyd George evidently felt that he had not done himself sufficient justice, and so on April 29 we get the following:

"Further report of the same meeting: Was told that my Local Option address was highly praised at Port Medoc. Spoke in the chapel to-day on 'Faith without Works.'"

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There is something to make us pause in that title, "Faith without Works."

If in 1885 Mr. Lloyd George knew enough of that subject to address a fairly large meeting upon it, he has since then perfected his knowledge. A highly charitable epitaph for him would be "Faith without Works." It sums up most of his great adventures.

One can almost imagine that he said in the case of the budget, or in that of the Insurance Act, or perhaps in both: "These are colossal schemes. I, at any rate, have faith in them, and I am their author, and I will make great speeches about them, and I will make others have faith in them too, and above all in me, and then when we all have faith in them and in me, we shall at least hope that they may work out all right."

We are compelled to take a grave view of these extracts. They ring and ring again with self. Did self die in that period, and if so, when and why? If self did not die, how much of self is there in the Lloyd George of to-day?

Was the attitude in the war simply taken for the reason that it would win an instant and gigantic notoriety for self? That attitude certainly duped the Boer leaders and prolonged the conflict, and perhaps doubled the slaughter, the wounds, and the suffering. If

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that attitude was conscientiously come to and honestly assumed, it was lamentable. If it was for self, it was simply devilish.

Again, in the budget and Insurance Act periods self is transparently present. Mr. Lloyd George picturesquely presented himself as Moses, to lead the people into the promised land. And his speeches were full of himself and he wrote of himself. He took every care that Moses showed brilliantly in the limelight.

There is an extract from his diary dated June 2, 1883, which is printed in the *Biography*:

“Tit-bit poetry in *Carnarvon and Denbigh Herald*, referring to my thirst for renown, &c. Perhaps (?) it will be gratified. I believe it depends mainly on what forces of pluck and industry I can muster.”

That extract is an ominous piece of self-revelation.

When was that “thirst for renown” sated? Does it still burn a parched throat? Nothing in all the world could condone the hideous wrong done during the war or extenuate the loss caused to the workers by the crude failure of the budget and the Insurance Act but honesty. If these were but exploits in quest of renown, then until we rid ourselves of the adventurer we shall not be safe.

Probably the just and true decision would

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be that in Mr. George's career there is a great deal of self, and at the same time much sympathy for others.] One can believe that he wakes up one morning and reads too much about some rival Minister in the papers. "We must get going or drop out," he may say.

And he gets going.

He finds a prejudice and builds a campaign on it. And he makes the campaign and the campaign makes him. One thing is certain: little things do not interest him. The quiet, unadvertisable, necessary work is left alone. His eye is for effect and not efficiency. One cannot help thinking that even the contemplation of his own funeral would be a delight to him, if only he could read the newspapers in the morning.

But that is not the stuff out of which we should make our statesmen !

CHAPTER III

PARLIAMENTARY BEGINNINGS

ON April 11, 1890, Mr. Lloyd George was returned to Parliament as the member for Carnarvon. His majority was 18.

His Election Address is before me—the address upon which he won twenty-three years ago. Twenty-three years have passed and not a single one of the electoral pledges set forth in that document has been fulfilled.

According to that address, Carnarvon was invited to return Mr. George so that legislation might be secured on the following matters :

Home Rule for Ireland.

Home Rule for Wales.

Welsh Disestablishment and Disendowment.

Land Transfer.

Enfranchisement of Leaseholds.

The Direct Veto in Temperance.

One Man One Vote.

A Free Breakfast-table.

Since 1890 the Liberal Party has held office for more than ten years. The men who voted

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for Mr. Lloyd George in 1890 have indeed "come empty away." The Election Address should be a classic example of the worthlessness of Radical promises. It was certainly a characteristic send-off for the man who was to prove himself in later years the foremost pledge-breaker in politics.

The speeches in which these legislative white elephants were paraded before credulous Welshmen have not been preserved. Public men owe far more to forgetfulness than they do to remembrance.

But there is one passage from one speech which is illuminating.

"The Tories forgot [said Mr. George] that they were not now living in the seventeenth century. He had once heard a man wildly declaiming against Mr. Tom Ellis as a parliamentary representative. According to that man, Mr. Ellis's disqualification consisted mainly in the fact that he had been brought up in 'a cottage.' The Tories had not yet realised that the day of the cottage-bred men had at last dawned."

This may be taken as the first recorded shot in Mr. George's class-war. Had the sentiment been amplified—no doubt it was in the speech itself, and probably in many of the others—the appeal would have been:

"I am a cottage-bred man. So are you.

The men who live in big houses are against us. Wealth and culture are the enemy. You and I must fight against them and enter into the kingdom from which we have for so long been ousted. The day of the cottage-bred men has dawned."

Under analysis the appeal becomes sheer illogical nonsense. It is one of those intensely personal irrelevancies which are always to be found as the basis of all the Lloyd Georgian campaigns.

The "cottage-bred" man suggests oppression and denial; humble beginnings and vast possibilities—unrealised. This same "cottage-bred" man is set up as a class antagonist to do and prevail against all who are not "cottage-bred" men. It is to be "cottage-bred" men against the world.

Yes, but what is the fight to be about? The conflict is not between men but measures. It is not cottages battling with mansions, but cause against cause. If we select any one or all of the proposals in Mr. Lloyd George's Election Address, not one of them would be any more beneficent or any less injurious whether they were carried by cottagers or squires.

The "cottage-bred" men might, it is true, have a programme of their own as against the squires, and they might rally to it more

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readily if they were spoken of as "cottage-bred" and the squires were damned as "squires." But the issues in that programme would never have fair trial if the contest became a personal encounter between one class and another. The welfare of the whole country can only be sustained if all sections of the community act fairly towards one another. This fine balance becomes instantly impossible when one side is poisoned with prejudice and advances a claim which is vindictive.

Of course, a man's place of breeding is for some purposes quite important. If we want fighters we believe that the average lad from the mountains is better than a boy from the slums. But if a man is to do brainwork, it is immaterial whether he is bred in a cottage or a palace. All his needs are personal. His aptitude must be developed, his mind broadened and stimulated. Books may help him vastly, but some wise, patient friends, a man or two of knowledge, will help him much more. It has in the past been the tragedy of the "cottage-bred" that they have been condemned to intellectual isolation. And this was so in Mr. Lloyd George's own case.

I give his own testimony—an extract from a speech which he made in his own village in 1900:

"Yonder smithy was my first parliament, where night after night we discussed and decided all the abstruse questions relating to this world and the next, in politics, in theology, in philosophy, and science. There was nothing too wide and comprehensive for us to discuss, and we settled all the problems amongst us without the slightest misgiving."

Of course they did. And Mr. Lloyd George has been doing the same thing ever since. You will notice that politics come before theology in his ordering. The disputants' knowledge of both subjects and of all the others must have been appallingly meagre. Ignorance wrangled with Ignorance, and Prejudice was in waiting to close the path to Truth.

From "yonder smithy" Mr. George probably gained his aptitude in debate, and, as likely as not, his plausibility. It was a training-ground in mental agility, but anything but a temple of knowledge. If the "cottage-bred" has no study and no instructor, he can hope to be nothing better than a word-twister. Nothing can be sadder than the limitations which that cottage-breeding has imposed on the Chancellor of the Exchequer. His outlook is still to-day as narrow as is his range of knowledge.

Many of those who have read what I have

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just written will be thinking of the parliamentary Labour Party. They, like Mr. George, are specialists on one subject. They, like him, know the crowd and speak in its language. Some folk seem to imagine that Mr. George invented Limehouse. Why, there has been Limehouse—and I think better Limehouse—from the platform, ever since Labour first found its tongue. But what has the parliamentary Labour Party done to make good the claim of the cottage-bred? They who should have been law-makers are merely witnesses. They can speak—and most of them very well—of the wrongs to be righted, but they have not the vaguest notion of the way in which matters can be put right. Their record condemns them for the utter futility of their constructive proposals. And in Parliament they have achieved nothing except the loss of their original identity. They have been so weak and sterile that they have had to clutch at the Radical programme to lead the electors to believe that they are even doing anything at all.

Of course, all classes should be represented amongst the law-makers, and poverty should stay no man from the public service. But efficiency should, amongst all classes, be the first qualification for membership. Our civil-

isation is complex, and there is no proposal, however small, but it has effects in most cases widening and accumulative and difficult to foresee, upon the other sections of the community. This is why no man of a narrow range can succeed in politics. He sets out to help one class, and he hurts that class for the reason that he has hit all the others. This is why Mr. George has failed, and it is the reason why the Labour Party has not succeeded, and it is also the reason why at certain periods the historic parties have also failed in their duty to the working-classes.

The historic parties are denounced by Labour for their class-legislation. Yet the Labour Party are solely in Parliament to achieve class-legislation, and are incapable of even doing that.

And Mr. George has from start to finish been a class-legislator. And he has only succeeded in doing woeful injury to the very class he professed to help.

Mr. George's parliamentary beginnings were characteristic. He caught up the echoes of his stump-oratory in Wales and let them resound again in St. Stephens.

Those were the days of the Coercion Act in Ireland. Mr. George thrilled Sir Wilfrid Lawson with the suggestion that there should be "a Coercion Act for publicans." It should

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be armed "with all the modern appliances, such as Star Chambers, inquiries, informers, 'shadows,' and removable magistrates. He believed that very few publicans would survive it."

What a glorious time he would have had in his later years had he killed "the trade." Why, his budgets have lived on it. He might have been condemned in despair to place a tax on investments in rhetoric, and speculations in wild abuse, with a super-tax on lime-light.

His next oration was an attack on Royalty—in exquisitely bad taste.

But he was busy in the country. He had won a bye-election of importance. The Radicals have ever had an eye on young men who can talk, and they keep them busy when they find them. Mr. Lloyd George was quickly in great demand in the country. He went up and down to big meetings. The cheers of the crowd were the breath of his life.

This, frankly, was a disaster to the young man's career. He measured his success in cheers. Once again fortune had snatched from him the chance of study. He became all froth and no body. His one object was limelight.

In 1891 the Tithe Bill provided him with

congenial occupation. He was very busy upon it, speaking often. All his bitter prejudice against other men's religious beliefs bubbled up into boiling invective. There was, however, a dramatic set-back to his attack on the Established Church. When the Clergy Discipline Bill was before the House in 1892, his virulent intervention in the debate was rewarded with a terrible trouncing from his own leader, Mr. Gladstone. None the less Wales was charmed with him. When the 1892 dissolution came, he returned gaily to his constituents. Not one of the pledges in his address had been fulfilled; he had achieved nothing to make anyone's lot lighter. What did it matter? He had made many speeches. He had found bitter biting words for old hates. And he was returned with an increased majority.

The Radical Government which took office in 1892 and fell in 1895 did not find in Mr. George a wholly reliable supporter. He was busy on a policy of his own. Mr. Tom Ellis had been made a junior Lord of the Treasury. Mr. Ellis was the leader of the Welsh members, and as soon as he was silenced by the acceptance of office the way was clear for Mr. George.

And Mr. George lost no time in advancing

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the cause of Welsh Nationalism. He demanded Home Rule for Wales, to the considerable embarrassment of many of the Liberal Party. Still he won a resounding popularity in Wales, even if he was a nuisance in the Liberal Whips' room. On the other hand, his violent support of the Bill to Disestablish and Disendow the Church in Wales may have somewhat rounded the edge of official disapproval.

On August 11, 1895, the Government fell. For eleven years the Radicals were to be in opposition. And Mr. George's whole mental equipment is limited to destructive criticism. He was to have the chance of his life. And he certainly took it.

At the polls he was returned with a majority practically unchanged. The hateful Tories were in power, and he hurried back to Westminster to tilt at the enemy and incidentally make his own reputation stronger.

CHAPTER IV

THE LLOYD GEORGE METHOD

ONE of the first achievements of the new Unionist Government was the passing of the Agricultural Rates Act. This measure was denounced by the Radicals as "a dole to the landlords," and was furiously opposed. Mr. Lloyd George was, of course, in the forefront of the calumniators. Mr. Chaplin was in charge of the bill, and Mr. George accused him over the floor of the House of promoting legislation by which he, Mr. Chaplin, would personally benefit to the extent of £700 a year. Mr. Chaplin indignantly denied the assertion; but Mr. George declined to withdraw, and even became bolder. Quivering with indignation, he shouted: "A capital value of two millions and a quarter will be added to the property of members of the Ministry." And on what, if you please, did he base this two and a quarter million indictment of corruption? It was his first big adventure in false figures in the House of Commons.

He first of all assumed that the landlord

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would intercept the rate relief which was provided for the tenant. As a matter of fact, that did not happen, and never has happened under the Act. Then he took a highly imaginary estimate of what ministerial landlords or their tenants paid in rates, and capitalised that total on a basis which yielded an attractive result. The allegation was as audacious as it was unscrupulous. Mr. George has since improved on the method—so far as sheer mendacity goes. During the final stages of the bill he was suspended.

When Mr. George scents a landlord he sees red. He was utterly and scandalously wrong in his charges. But that, seemingly, did not matter. They were good enough for limelight effects.

The extent to which he was in error will be seen from the following facts.

The Act merely embodied the recommendations of a Royal Commission appointed by the Radicals themselves.

In 1905, on the eve of a General Election, when the same Act came before the House for renewal after being in operation for eleven years, no Front Bench Radical challenged a division on the second reading, and only 59 Radicals went into the Lobby against the bill.

The Radicals have been in office for the last seven years, and the Act is still in force.

There is a volume of evidence from Radicals who sit for agricultural constituencies to prove that the Act is a blessing; that it has not filled the pockets of landlords at all, but it has been and is of great help to agriculture. For many years before this Act was passed agricultural wages had been stationary. Following upon the Act wages rose about ten per cent. in the next few years.

That Mr. George should have been wrong in his facts and his conclusions is no matter for wonder. That he should have rounded off his rhetoric with a wild charge of wholesale corruption is only what the experience of later years has taught us to expect. He was hunting for flame-food; something on which prejudice could gorge itself. He found it—as he always does. It would be wise, however, for agriculturists to remember that if Mr. George had had his way in 1896, they would have had no Agricultural Rates Act.

In recent years we have listened to many a denunciation from Mr. George on the iniquity of obstruction. He himself reduced obstruction to a fine art. Irrespective of right or wrong, his knowledge or ignorance on any subject, when he was in Opposition he did his utmost to make Government progress impossible.

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I give an extract from a letter of his under date March 27, 1896, the whole of which is published in his *Biography*:

"They thought they might get a bill called the Military Manœuvres Bill before midnight, *but I soon developed a keen interest in soldiering.* I moved an amendment on the spur of the moment. Lowther would not allow it because it was not strictly in order. Very well. I altered it at once. He then had to take it. I divided, and the bill was talked out. The Under-Secretary for War came to me just now to say that he would be most willing to meet my views on the subject if I had any objection to any part of the bill. *That's the way to play the game. My blood is now up. I hadn't warmed to it before.*"

(The italics are ours.)

And his blood was up. He certainly "played the game"! His prolonged obstruction over the years was amazingly ingenious—and equally shameful.

In 1897 the Voluntary Schools Bill and the Irish Local Government Bill provided fresh scope for him, and in the case of the latter he made again some of those charges of personal interest which always seem to give him especial delight. While the Radical Party was wrangling over the leadership troubles, he was fighting for his prejudices. In those days he

was tireless ; never missing a chance ; not minding at all where he hit, or how he hit, or when he hit. His pertinacity was admirable. His methods were disgraceful. He was an apache in Parliament.

And all the while he was fighting for recognition, and for that alone. He had no constructive proposals whatever to offer. He merely opposed and obstructed with one eye on the crowd, while the other was blinded by limelight.

His party was under a cloud, and he doubtless shared its depression. Failure's heaviest penalty in his eyes is the personal effect on himself. The Opposition of which he was a member was doing badly ; it was rent by dissensions. His own causes, Home Rule for Wales and the assault on the Welsh Church, were making no progress at all. But whatever the fate of movements, the man Lloyd George must be in the fore. Audacity of interposition and vitriolic invective would achieve that, at any rate.

It is a relief to turn from this branch of his activities to another. In May 1899, the Unionist Government appointed a Select Committee to inquire into Old Age Pensions. The majority of the members of it were Unionists, and Mr. George was one of those who were chosen to represent the Opposition. When

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the final division was taken on the Report, Mr. George voted with the majority—in other words, it was the official Unionist solution of the problem which he favoured. And that solution was, with variations, the basis of the Old Age Pensions Act.

Thus we see that the first constructive measure of his later years was a scheme for which he was indebted to his political opponents. They did the builder's work, and he took the credit of the edifice.

This movement for Old Age Pensions marks a turning-point in his political objective. Never before had he interested himself in any definite attempt to repair the social fabric. He had, at last, come to the politics of the hearth. With such a man the new possibilities of this class of effort would unfold themselves quickly. Hitherto he had had an ear for applause; now he had an eye on the ballot-box. He was to start well. With Old Age Pensions he was able to offer the voters "something for nothing." In the budget the idea was developed, and indeed he believed that he had improved on it. Under the budget the crowd was again to be promised "something for nothing," with the added attraction that the wicked lords, and grasping landowners, and depraved brewers were to pay for it. Later, with the Insurance Act the

old method became complex. Having regard to the fact that the people were laid under contribution, it was impossible to dupe them into the belief that they got benefits without paying for them. But the juggler's resources were not exhausted. What was easier than to tell them that they were trading on magnificent terms. "You are getting ninepence for fourpence," was the cry.

"We are paying you our fourpences," is the answer. "We are not getting what you promised, and you never asked us what we wanted. Let us spend our own money. What are our votes for?"

Surely it would have been better for Mr. George himself if he had recognised his limitations and been content to remain merely a brilliant nuisance as a party hack. His own constructive work—the Old Age Pensions Scheme was not his own—has never been anything but a bid for votes by an appeal to cupidity. That he, of all men, should with his Insurance Act dip in the poor man's pocket is an outrage which Demos will neither forgive nor forget.

It is hardly safe just now to be seen carrying a copy of his life.

CHAPTER V

THE PRINCE OF PRO-BOERS

ON October 11, 1899, the Transvaal War began. The Unionists, of course, were in power, with the Liberals, led by Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, in Opposition.

The following day the present Prime Minister, Mr. Asquith, made a speech at Newburgh, in which he said :

“As regards our duty—our duty, I will not say as party politicians, but as British citizens and patriots—it seems to me to be clear. It is, in face of the emergency which has arisen, to stand together with an unbroken front, to see that, in this conflict which has been forced upon us, the prosecution of it upon our side should be with such promptitude and energy as to secure the most rapid and therefore the most merciful end ; and as far as in us lies, to enable our country to be victorious and magnanimous in victory.”—*The Times*, Oct. 13, 1899.

It will be noted that Mr. Asquith at that time was one of Mr. Lloyd George's leaders.

Mr. Asquith candidly admitted that the war had been forced upon us, and advised that mercy to the Boers was to be found in the rapid prosecution of it. Mr. Lloyd George, however, declined to accept the first conclusion, and strenuously opposed his leader's advice on the second.

It is unnecessary to weary the reader with quotations, but contemporary records prove that the views of Mr. Asquith were in favour with all that was reputable in the Radical party.

Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman expressed in the House of Commons his preparedness to vote supplies, and his party, as a party, gave their support to the war movement.

But Mr. Lloyd George opposed the war.

Why?

There are men who oppose all wars. The cocoa magnates have of late years bought newspapers and financed Members of Parliament. There is no evidence that Mr. George was in the toils of the peace-at-any-price people. Indeed, we have read speeches of his which justify war under certain conditions. And seeing that in this case the Boers invaded our territory, it is difficult to understand how in principle Mr. George could justify his opposition at any rate in the early stages of the conflict.

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His attitude is hailed by his biographer with relief. That gentleman lays great store by it. The war was amazingly popular, and Mr. George condemned it. How then could any man denounce the idol as being a demagogue? A demagogue surely courts public favour and cringes to it. And Mr. George enraged the people by seeking to end a popular war.

But let us see.

It is clear that Mr. George realised that the war was vastly popular at the moment; it is equally true, from the evidence, that he was convinced that in a very short time it would be profoundly unpopular.

The biographer quotes an extract from a letter from Mr. George to his brother which was written in the summer of 1899, a few months before the war broke out. I will quote it:

"If we go to war with the Transvaal there will be no pensions. They are fools to quarrel with the Boers. *It will ultimately be unpopular*, as it is not only essentially an unjust quarrel, but what is more, from the point of view of the man in the street, an unprofitable one. There is neither gain nor glory in it at all adequate to the sacrifice."

And there we have it in a sentence. The politician, who in his youthful days, on his

own confession, had been consumed with a "thirst for renown" which subsequently had developed into a lust for notoriety, now is found deciding either for or against the war, according to the "gain and glory" which can be got out of it. This letter is clear evidence that before ever the war broke out Mr. George had come to the conclusion that it would "ultimately be unpopular."

On October 27, on the occasion of the First War Debate in the House of Commons, Mr. George made a speech. He re-echoed there the opinion which he had expressed in his letter. He said:

"He believed that there would be a reaction against the Government before long, when the country came to realise the true state of affairs, and that was why there was some hurry in holding bye-elections in this country just now."

So we see that he not only believed himself that the war would become unpopular, but he was convinced that the Government shared his view.

Again, on February 6, he announced in the House of Commons that:

". . . The Government has landed the country in a great mess, and the best they can do is to get them out of it. *I do not wish that the Liberal Party should get the opprobrium*

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of paying the enormous bill that has been incurred."

A later passage in the same speech is even more striking evidence of Mr. Lloyd George's belief that the war would become unpopular. He went on to state :

"The Colonial Secretary said that if the war was unjust and unrighteous it ought not to be prosecuted. That is the view taken not by a majority, but by a very strong body of the people in the country, and a growing one. Whatever line we take in this House, discussion will go on in the country in workshops and factories *until that conviction is realised."*

Mr. George's opposition to the war was not a challenge to unpopularity, but a bold move for popularity. He weighed the chances and backed his opinion. He risked a stake to-day in order that he might win, as he believed he would, to-morrow.

He had been in the House for some years. He had done a vast amount of work. The picturesqueness of his appeals had won for him as much space in the Press as was given to a leader. He was indeed himself a leader in Wales, and his party was not happy in its leaders at Westminster. There were other men, older men, tried men, ahead of him. While he remained in the party ruck he must

keep his appointed place and be content to tread on their heels. It was thus and then that the wonderful chance came.

War had been declared. All the Conservatives supported it and all the Radical leaders supported the Conservatives.

If he stood out—alone. . . .? And if the war did become unpopular he would be the one man in politics who would be acclaimed for sound judgment. The crowd, with its hooting of to-day, would swing round to deafen him with cheers. And he alone would be able to say :

“I told you so. I alone was right. I risked my very political life on my foresight. Heaven has indeed sent you a leader at last !”

Mr. George's attitude in the war was nothing but a gamble. And he has gambled since. He backed the outsider and meant to “scoop the pool.” And he never imagined he could lose. In those days he must have noted the manifestations of public feeling, just as the gambler watches the spin, waiting and waiting.

But he was wrong. The cheers were not for him. He had gambled and lost.

What, then, was left to him? The war was popular—wildly popular. He could only retrieve his fortunes by making it unpopular.

And this he deliberately set himself to do.

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There was no prejudice and no emotion of the public mind that he did not play upon.

He denounced it as being a capitalists' war. British soldiers were giving their lives to win gold and diamonds for millionaires. Surely *that* would hit?

But the nation remembered President Kruger's ultimatum, with its studied insolence, and realised how the Uitlanders had been maltreated under the British Flag. And they still hooted.

So Mr. George varied his indictment. It was a Chamberlain war. And Mr. Chamberlain was Kynochs, and the more explosives there were used the bigger the dividends.

The Kynoch legend was exploded, however, the very instant it saw the light.

So on to the Concentration Camps and awful pictures of brutal treatment of women and children.

And these in turn failed.

In those days Mr. George was probably so desperate that he can scarcely have been responsible. Yet the Kynoch legend is a classic in its way, and is worth setting forth as an example of reckless untruthfulness.

It was the development of a series of incredibly bitter attacks on Mr. Chamberlain.

In Wolverhampton, on April 23, 1901, Mr. George said :

"This gentleman from Birmingham, who had made no personal sacrifices for the war, was the Mephistopheles of this play. He was the marplot who stopped the piece. If braver men than he were dying he was responsible."

Again, in Llangriths, October 18, 1901 :

"We had raised a barrier of dead children's bodies between the British and the Boer races in South Africa. Who was responsible for this? Who but Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, who had caused the war in the Transvaal."

In Bristol, on January 6, 1902 :

"Judas only finished himself, but 'this man' had finished thousands. Mr. Chamberlain prevented peace. In South Africa people were murdering each other, and the price had to be paid by us and our children's children for generations. Meanwhile, Messrs. Kynoch and Co. had declared a ten per cent. bonus."

At Llanelly, on October 7, 1901 :

"Who is to blame? Not Lord Kitchener. The man who knew what war meant, and had gone through it and strove hard for peace. Nor is Lord Milner, who has seen the desolation that war has effected in South Africa, but there was a man who strolled among orchids six thousand miles away from the deadly bark of the Mauser rifle. At his door all these deaths lie—Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, who

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never faced the danger, sends thousands of braver men than himself to their death."

Now what is the truth with regard to Kynoch? Simply this. Mr. Chamberlain had not a single farthing in the firm, and used no influence whatever in their favour. The chairman of the firm did happen to be a Chamberlain—Mr. Arthur Chamberlain, a well-known Radical, a brother, and strong political rival in the Midlands, of the Colonial Secretary. It was from Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, of all persons, that Mr. Arthur Chamberlain got his order.

But that was near enough for Mr. George. One brother in the ordinary course of his business was supplying goods at prices approved by the Government. The other brother had no more concern in the trade than had he—Mr. Lloyd George—himself. But mix them up together. At any rate, they bore the same surname. The public would not know.

Surely tactics of that kind are merely rascally and an outrage on all decency. They brought, as one might expect, heated protests from his own leaders and his own Press. We may dismiss this disgusting incident with the impassioned rebuke which fell from Sir Edward Grey :

"He regretted as much as anyone could

do the personal bitterness of the attacks that had been made on Mr. Chamberlain. To impute personal motives in public life, to utter hints and imputations about private affairs, could only come from a combination of malice and stupidity which ought to be resented everywhere."

Seeing that the Kynoch charge is being revived by way of a set-off or condonation of speculation in American Marconis, we deal fully with the facts and speeches in the following chapter.

With regard to the refuge camps, Mr. George's charges were equally wild and inaccurate.

In the House of Commons, on June 17, 1901, he spoke as follows :

"How do we treat them [the refugees]? Why, we half starve them. We give them bad food, no shelter, we clothe them badly . . . we deprive these poor women of everything, we herd them together in camps . . ."

The reply to these accusations came instantly, and from Mr. George's own party.

It will suffice if we quote from indignant leading articles in the *Daily Chronicle*, the principal Radical organ.

Thus on June 21, 1901, the *Daily Chronicle* assured us that :

"The British refugees have been, and are,

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in even worse case than the Boers, and they get no sympathy from the anti-war fanatics."

And again, on June 27, 1901, the *Daily Chronicle* announced :

"There is again among all classes a preponderating conviction that in spite of some blunders and regrettable incidents, the war has been conducted with full regard for the claims of humanity, and therefore a profound resentment against attacks, overt or implied, upon the so-called ' barbarism ' of the British Army."

On June 17, 1901, Mr. Haldane spoke in the House and repudiated Mr. George's views, and on June 20 Mr. Asquith did the same thing with even greater emphasis.

Such issues as these were only Mr. George's side attacks. His frontal indictment of the war was that it was unrighteous and unnecessary, and he addressed many meetings in his attempt to form a body of public opinion in support of that contention.

He failed. But in one thing he succeeded. He led the Boers to imagine that the nation was divided, and encouraged them in a resistance which was as hopeless as it was tragic.

That he deliberately set out to do this is proved by innumerable speeches. They are nauseating reading, and we trust that one will suffice.

We will quote from his speech to the Palmerston Club at Oxford in January 1900 :

“We have the whole of the civilised world banded in hostility to us. Lord Rosebery said the other day that Europe was unanimous in its opposition to us. He might have made an exception in the case of Turkey, which is sympathetic. As to America, four-fifths of the American press are opposed to us, *and opinion there is growing very rapidly in favour of the Boers*. They made an honest effort at the first to find some excuse for us, but the facts were too strong for them.”

What effect could such an utterance as this have when cabled out to South Africa except to prolong the conflict. The man who delivered such a speech at such a time can lay no claim to statesmanship if he did not measure its consequences. If he did, it was an outrage to humanity.

It now remains to sum up and pass judgment upon Mr. George's attitude towards the war. It was that of an opportunist. He was wrong ; but he was no less an opportunist for that. He was convinced that the war would become unpopular and he staked his career on that conclusion. He should pay the price.

He opposed the war, and as a result of his opposition prolonged it. Lyddite killed many a man in South Africa, and so did Mr. George's

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speeches. Again he should pay the price. He was wrong, and he tried to right himself—to save his own repute at the cost of wounds, anguish, and death. Ah, it is a heavy price that he must pay!

And what of his claim to statesmanship? Is this man fit to be a nation's leader?

Assuming that his view was right and that the war was unjust and unrighteous, what was the statesman's solution? If the Boers gave way, their wrongs—if they had any—could have been redressed in the first settlement when peace came. *That*, and that only, was the time to plead.

While the war lasted—a war with a whole nation behind it—an anti-war campaign was as merciless as it was futile. It merely prolonged hostilities, and encouraged continued resistance.

It meant more victims for the Mauser and less compassion at the finish.

So much for the frontal attack. In every side-issue Mr. George was wrong—and proved to be wrong by his own friends and party. He had the stupendous vanity to back his opinions against an Empire, and he fought on and on to poison the people's mind and win them to his side.

It is impossible to say that he was fighting for anyone but Lloyd George.

Disaster, death, the agony of thousands—they were in the balance against the political career of a single man.

No god of wood or stone in all the history of human sacrifices in the world's dark places has had such an offering of blood. And what he did then—given the chance he will do again. It was so with the Insurance Act, only less so. He took his tribute in pence and not in life. That is his only difference. It was the same autocracy and the same autocrat.

Democracy is no shibboleth. It is a safeguard of freedom. And Mr. George is, and always must be, its enemy.

Power with him means a chance for Lloyd George, and if the nation does not agree with Lloyd George—so much the worse for the nation !

That is bad. But we submit that if the nation did agree with Lloyd George, it would be even worse than ever for the nation.

CHAPTER VI

THE KYNOCH DEBATE. MR. GEORGE BUILDS HIS OWN GALLOWS

WHEN in December 1900 Mr. George with befitting solemnity propounded to the House of Commons the principles by which public men should be guided in their private relationships, he cannot have imagined that thirteen years later he himself would be judged by his own standards. He had denounced the war as being a capitalists' war, but the public did not believe it, so he changed his ground of attack. He fastened upon Mr. Joseph Chamberlain on platform after platform. He held him up to obloquy as being the villain of the play. But the public liked the villain, and was not at all out of favour with the play; and so, step by step, Mr. George was driven to the extraordinary position of having to condemn Mr. Chamberlain for having promoted the war in the financial interests of himself and of his family.

This attack had a run on provincial platforms, and ultimately gained such prominence

that it was necessary to repudiate it altogether or to bring it to trial before the House of Commons. We can well believe that this latter step was reluctantly taken.

On December 10, Mr. Lloyd George, who had been the inventor and the principal publisher of these slanders against Mr. Chamberlain, moved an amendment to the Address. But why Mr. Lloyd George? He was only a freelance—a private Member of Parliament. If there was any foundation at all for the charges, the burden of proving them should, of course, have been borne by the official Opposition in the House. *The Times*, in a leading article in its issue of December 11, tersely stated the object of the onslaught in the following words :

“The attack on Mr. Chamberlain, as Mr. Balfour manfully said, was not, as it professed to be, an attempt to assert the abstract principle of purity in politics. It was an endeavour to discredit the character of a statesman who has made himself obnoxious to the opposite party by giving them the soundest beating of which there is any record in recent political history.”

The text of Mr. George's amendment to the Address was as follows :

“And we humbly beg to represent to your Majesty that Ministers of the Crown and

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Members of either House of Parliament holding subordinate offices in any Public Department ought to have no interest, direct or indirect, in any firm or company competing for contracts with the Crown, unless the nature and extent of such interest being first declared, your Majesty shall sanction the countenance thereof, and when necessary shall have directed such precautions to be taken as may effectively prevent any suspicion of influence or favouritism in the allocation of such contracts."

And on this amendment Mr. George made a speech. Sheer necessity had compelled him to venture into some sort of a detailed attack on Mr. Chamberlain, and his alleged participation in contracts in connection with the war. Mr. George, however, had not the pluck to detail in the House of Commons one-fiftieth part of the gross and scandalous insinuations which for some months before had had currency on Radical platforms and a muffled echo in the Radical press. When he came to the charges, which in the end he had the hardihood to make, he was crushingly answered by Mr. Chamberlain himself. We shall give a full extract from Mr. Chamberlain's reply; but what concerns us most at this moment, in view of the fact that Mr. George himself is in the Marconi pillory, is a restatement of the prin-

ciples which, according to Mr. George's own view, ought to be held sacred by public men.

Here are the necessary passages from Mr. George's speech :

"He said that attention had frequently been called in the House within the last few years to Ministers engaging in operations which brought their private interests into conflict with their public position. He did not, however, propose to refer to any of these cases except generally, in order to show the House that this motion was simply part and parcel of the policy of objecting to operations of the kind. It was his intention to confine himself simply to facts, most of them fresh, most of them discovered within the last few weeks, and none of which had been brought to the attention of the House. He deemed it the duty of some member of the House to state these facts in the presence of the Ministers arraigned, in order to give them a full opportunity for explanations. There were two or three Ministers whose names had been associated with the companies concerning which there had been so much discussion of late.

"It was very difficult to lay down a rule for the conduct of public men in matters of this kind. The only Act of Parliament which dealt with this was passed in the reign of George III, when most of the industry and commerce

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of the country were in the hands of private firms, and rules formed in those circumstances were neither adequate nor applicable to the circumstances of the present day, when most of the industries were carried on by joint-stock enterprises.

“With regard to the principle which ought to be laid down, he might appeal, with confidence, to the Rt. Hon. gentleman, the Colonial Secretary, and to the rules which he himself had laid down. No one, he would venture to say, was a better judge than the Rt. Hon. gentleman, and no one had been more ruthless than he in criticising transactions of the character of which he complained.

“He believed the Rt. Hon. gentleman signalised his entry into municipal life by a motion condemning a councillor who had been guilty of contracting with the corporation; and in 1885 the Rt. Hon. gentleman made a very severe attack on Lord Salisbury because the noble Lord and his agents and friends in the Upper House had insisted upon the insertion of a clause in an Act of Parliament, the effect of which would be to give an enormously enhanced value to Lord Salisbury’s own property in London.

“The present Colonial Secretary objected to the appointment by the Government of Sir Hercules Robinson as High Commissioner

because he had held some shares in Rhodesian companies. Sir Hercules Robinson had parted with the shares at the time of his appointment ; but the Rt. Hon. gentleman said that a person appointed to represent the Queen should not only be pure, but, like Cæsar's wife, above suspicion. *It was not merely enough in the opinion of the Rt. Hon. gentleman that an officer of the State should be incorruptible, but he must have no association with companies, either past or present association, which would make him open to suspicion.*

“The second regulation which the Rt. Hon. gentleman laid down was for the conduct of his own officers in Ceylon. It was:

“‘No officer shall be allowed to engage in commercial pursuits or purchase shares in any local land company ; *nor shall any officer make or continue an investment which may interest him privately in any private or public undertaking with which his public duty is connected. All officers shall confidentially consult the Government as regards any investment which may be reasonably open to doubt.* The foregoing regulation applies to the holding of land by an officer in the name or names of members of an officer's family.’

“He was sorry to say that if his facts were accurate, the Rt. Hon. gentleman was the first to

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break his own commandments. The Colonial Secretary had stated in the House that he had no interest, direct or indirect, in any company which supplied to the Government munitions or war material. The Rt. Hon. gentleman had since admitted that that statement was not strictly correct."

Mr. Chamberlain : "No."

Mr. Lloyd George said :

"He understood the Rt. Hon. gentleman to say in a letter to the Hon. Member for Bradford that with regard to 'Tubes' that was not strictly correct."

Mr Chamberlain : "I do not admit it."

Mr. Lloyd George remarked that he would refer to it later on. He then proceeded to give a list of the companies in which he maintained Mr. Joseph Chamberlain and Mr. Austen Chamberlain were interested.

"The first company was Hoskins & Sons, Ltd. Mr. George contended that this company were Admiralty contractors; that it was a private company 'owned by the Rt. Hon. gentleman's family, by persons who were related to the Colonial Secretary in such a way that he ventured to say the Rt. Hon. gentleman's interest in the company was direct, or certainly indirect.' He contended that Mr. Austen Chamberlain had £3000 in the company."

The next company he dealt with was the Birmingham Trust, in which the Colonial Secretary held 500 ordinary shares of £10 each, and also some preference shares. His family had also a large holding in the company. Mr. Austen Chamberlain, with two others, was a holder of shares of £2500 nominal capital. He inferred from that that he held the shares as a trustee, "but the fact made no difference as far as the present point was concerned."

This company, the Birmingham Trust, held a considerable number of shares in Tubes, Ltd., and another considerable number in Elliot's Metal Company. This interest in Tubes was about £12,500, and he found that Mr. Arthur Chamberlain, who since 1899 had been Chairman of the Company, held about 74,800 shares.

Mr. George then made allegations of a similar character against the Colonial Secretary in connection with the Colombo Commercial Company, and he summed up his indictment in the following striking words:

"He did not say that the Rt. Hon. gentleman knew all about this company in which he had invested his money or about this contract given to the company." (*N.B.*—Mr. George admitted that Mr. Chamberlain had acquired his shares in the Colombo Com-

mercial Company "before he came into office.")

He went on to say, "he accepted implicitly the Rt. Hon. gentleman's statement that he was too much engaged in public affairs to be able to look after his own investments, or to make that inquiry about them which an ordinary, careful, business man would make. But he did assert that the fact illustrated the danger of investments of this character in the hands of Ministers of the Crown."

He next turned to the Kynoch Company. "In this company the holding of the Colonial Secretary's relations was in present value between £230,000 and £250,000. Mr. Austen Chamberlain was interested presumably as trustee to the extent of £15,000. The company manufactured cordite and munitions of war, and undoubted favouritism had been shown to it. . . . The Rt. Hon. gentleman complained that corruption had been suggested. . . . He had made a simple statement of facts, and they read corruption into it.

". . . It was said they were attacking the Rt. Hon. gentleman's private character, but they were dealing with published facts. If they had intercepted his private correspondence, then he might have been justified in flinging at them some of those epithets which he was in the habit of throwing at his political oppo-

nents. He said, with regard to these matters, in the words of the Rt. Hon. gentleman: 'It is not treasonable, but it is improper.'

"His next point was that although there was no charge or suggestion of corruption, still things had been done which would set a precedent which might legitimately be used later to justify corruption itself. They were bound to examine the facts, and judge upon them. These rules were laid down not altogether to prevent, to hit corruption, but to prevent circumstances that might justify corruption in others. He knew nothing in which these rules ought to be enforced with greater rigidity than in war contracts. . . . If Ministers of the Crown were allowed to have large interests, directly or indirectly, in firms providing munitions of war, he knew of no greater danger to the peace of this country. It was not that any Minister they could imagine, sitting in the House, would ever deliberately, for the sake of promoting his own private interests, engage in any war. That was too horrible a suggestion even to think about, and he did not suggest it. But there was again the subtle influence of the constant action of the man's permanent interest on his judgment. It gave him a bias without his knowing it.

"He did not say that the Secretary for the

Colonies or the Secretary to the Treasury had done anything to lower the standard of proud pre-eminence which they enjoyed as a country in this matter. What he did say was, that they had given legitimate grounds for uneasiness, and, above all, that they had established precedents which, if they were followed, would lead to something infinitely worse than anything he had enumerated that day."

In other words, Mr. Lloyd George threw the utmost amount of mud that he could possibly collect, and then ran round the wall when he was threatened with a chase, and said :

"I did not mean anything, and if you think I did, it was only for the public good."

Surely Mr. Chamberlain was justified in opening his reply with the words :

"... This is not a fair fight, and I do think it hard that after twenty-five years of parliamentary service I should, in the full light of day, have to stand up here and explain to my colleagues on both sides of the House that I am not a thief or a scoundrel. It is all very well to make unctuous repudiations, such as the Hon. and learned gentleman has just done, of any intention to attack myself or my honour—for it is a question affecting my personal honour.

"... Of course, the amendment is only a peg on which to hang this personal attack.

“ . . . Now, I would first explain the facts of the case. What happened? Two or three days before the election a certain attack was made upon me. It was continued throughout the election, and pressed even down to the present time.

“ . . . It took the form of a number of alleged facts as to certain companies with which my name was connected by the comments of the writers who dealt with the subjects. . . . The Hon. and learned gentleman, who has just sat down, was careful to repeat again and again that he made no imputation upon my personal honour. That is what these papers said at intervals in the course of the conspiracy of slander to which they lent themselves, and it is true that nobody has made an accusation. It has been a conspiracy of insinuation, which is infinitely worse.

“ Sir, I think that no one has the right to insinuate, as the Hon. and learned gentleman has just done, anything against the honour of a fellow member, or indeed against the honour of any man, unless he is prepared to support it by a direct accusation.

“ What is the result of the form in which these statements have appeared? Why, I do not suppose there are many members of the House who took the trouble to read them,

but let those who have read any of them say whether the suggestion which they were intended to convey was not that I had made an improper and corrupt use of my political and official position in order to benefit either myself or some members of my family.

"It is all very well for those who made these insinuations to deny the effect which they produced, but I could bring to the House, if I thought it desirable to mix myself up with all this mud, speech after speech made by Hon. Members of this House and by their supporters, in which I was directly charged, in consequence of these insinuations, with fattening upon the profits which I had made out of a war which I had provoked.

". . . The attempt in this charge is to make a public man responsible, not for his own acts, but for the acts of his relations. I am interested as a shareholder in two of the companies which have been mentioned, and I will deal with them directly. My relations are interested, I have no doubt, although I know nothing about the alleged amount of their interest and details of that kind, in the other companies which have been mentioned.

". . . What is the motive for bringing in the investments of my relations, over which I have no control, and in which I really have no interest? The motive is to bring me into

it, to make me responsible for a thing over which in no conceivable circumstances can I be responsible.

“ . . . I have not given out any contracts, certainly no contract connected with any one of the companies to which reference has been made.

“ . . . About the companies in which my relations are engaged I leave them to defend themselves in the law courts from the special slanders directed against their name, and I say, with regard to them, that I cannot prevent, whatever anyone else may do, my relations from investing in anything they please. They never consult me; I cannot control them. I should not have the slightest influence upon them if I interfered, and I cannot prevent them from taking Government contracts if they can get them in the ordinary course of their business. But this I can and do say, and I think it is all that the House in its fairness will ask of any Minister: that never during the whole course of my political career—whether as a private member or as a Minister—never have I been asked to interfere, nor have I interfered, never have I been asked to use my influence, nor have I ever used it, in order to secure any pecuniary gain for myself or for my relatives in any improper way whatever.

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“Now, as to the two cases, for there are only two cases, in which I am admittedly interested. I am a shareholder in two companies, the Colombo Commercial Company and the Birmingham Trust Company. . . . Almost immediately after I entered Parliament I gave up my directorships, and I have never accepted the many offers of directorships which have been made to me since.

“. . . When I went into public life I gave up private business altogether; I withdrew my capital, such as it was. I had to invest it somewhere, but I have endeavoured in the whole course of my public life to be in the position in which Cæsar’s wife should have been, to give no cause even of suspicion to the most malicious of my opponents. I defy anyone to do more than I did to keep out of investments that were likely to bring me into relations to the Government or public works.

“I will take one case. At one time I was a shareholder in the Small Arms Company and in another company—Kynochs. . . . I sold out of them at a loss. Not that I held there was any moral obligation on me to do so—not at all. But because, knowing the kind of criticism to which I have been so frequently subjected during my public life, I thought it desirable in the work which I had to do, that I should not be hampered in the discharge of

that work by having to reply to charges such as these.

“ . . . Now, I come to another matter which has reference to another company—the Colombo Commercial Company. . . . I joined the company twenty-three years ago. . . . I know nothing whatever of any change in the business of the company—nothing whatever.

“ . . . Sir, there is a company called the Birmingham Trust Company. It is one of the many companies of that description which exist in all our large towns. It is a local concern. The Chairman of the company is a highly respected Birmingham alderman. He has a reputation for shrewdness and business capacity in which great confidence is felt. To him was entrusted sums in the hope that he would invest them for me, but it never entered into my head that that could bring me into any responsibility for the investments which that company might make without my knowledge.

“ . . . I knew absolutely nothing as to the nature of a single investment that this company had made until I was told that they held some investments in ‘Tubes.’ . . . Since these imputations have been put about, I have made inquiries. I am told that the Birmingham Trust Company has £400,000 invested,

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and that the value of its investments a short time ago in Tubes was £1500.

“ . . . My share in the investment of the tubes is £60.

“If the object of those who entered into this conspiracy was to give pain, I must admit that they have succeeded. . . . They have not injured me—they have not injured my cause. . . . But they have introduced into our public life methods of controversy which are unworthy, and have made it more difficult for honourable, sensitive men to serve the State.”

Mr. Haldane subsequently took part in this debate, and said :

“I accept unreservedly — I have never doubted it—the assurance of the absolute purity of the motive which had actuated both the Rt. Hon. gentleman and the Financial Secretary.”

Mr. McKenna followed and said :

“Not a shadow of a suggestion of corruption, however, was made against the Colonial Secretary or the Secretary of the Treasury.”

Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman followed and said :

“He must disown any intention whatever to bring those wild accusations against the Colonial Secretary, which he so naturally repelled.”

When the House divided, Mr. Lloyd George's

amendment was defeated by a majority of 142 ; in other words, more than two Members of Parliament voted against it for every one that voted for it.

In view of what has happened in connection with American Marconis, an extract from the speech by Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman is particularly interesting :

“The object of the amendment, and what the object of all right-minded men who have the public interest in view, ought to be, could not be better expressed than it is by a passage in *The Economist* of Saturday last. It is there said :

“‘If a Minister happens to be connected, directly or indirectly, with any company whose dividends arise mainly or largely from Government contracts which he can in any way influence, the country expects him to sever his connection with such companies before taking office.’”

“That is a very exact and correct statement,” said Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman.

If we applied that standard to the conduct of those Ministers who interested themselves in American Marconis, it would be difficult to formulate a defence for them.

Mr. R. W. Perks, M.P., now Sir Robert Perks, the great Nonconformist leader, summed up in a single sentence in his speech

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at Louth on December 21, 1901, this onslaught on Mr. Chamberlain. He said:

“A motion which, under the guise of asserting a principle, is really intended to injure a man's character and so defeat his political policy is, in my opinion, not an honest motion.”

CHAPTER VII

POLITICAL NONCONFORMITY AND CHINESE SLAVERY

THE year 1902 brought with it Mr. Balfour's Education Act, and Mr. George rushed into the fray as the champion of outraged nonconformity. Into the controversy itself we need not enter : we will not judge by what was said but by what has happened. The Bill which Mr. George denounced so furiously in the House and in the country has been an Act of Parliament these many years. Its success in working proves once again the unsoundness of his judgment.

But we cannot leave the Education Act at that. "Passive Resistance" was preached, and every political nonconformist bought a cheap halo with the money with which he should have paid his rates. There was eighteen pennyworth of martyrdom for anyone who wanted it, and hymns of praise in the Bethels and advertisement in the Press. By Mr. George political nonconformity was swept into that frenzy in which it loves to

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luxuriate. The ranters found a Paradise in which the latter-day saints vied with each other in the use of disgraceful language, and denounced the Conservatives with greater zeal than they assail the devil.

It was a matter of conscience, they claimed, and Mr. George was the keeper of their conscience. For this Act they would not pay. They would go to prison. And so they might have done if each had not arranged with the other to pay the other's fine.

What a campaign of cant and hypocrisy it all was to be sure. That Act is still in force. The Radicals have been in office since 1906, and they have not touched a comma in it. Nonconformity still pays, and Mr. George with the rest of them. No voice is raised now. No one goes to prison in these days. What has become of all the "consciences"? And what has become of all Mr. George's wild speeches and the votes which were won by them? Those "consciences" are in pawn to the Radical Party, and the votes have been misappropriated to other ventures.

This Education campaign of Mr. George's was not merely a campaign against an Act which was a good Act, but the events which have followed it expose it as being disgustingly insincere.

At the time, however, it served a purpose.

And that was enough. After the war, Mr. George was in need of a body behind him. Political nonconformity gratefully clasped the enemy of the country to its bosom. When political nonconformity takes the platform Mr. George is sure of admirers.

That campaign was nothing short of an imposture. If Mr. George had no other conviction against him, it, in itself, was scandalous enough to debar him from any claim to confidence in the future. It was a worthy prelude to the Chinese slavery lie.

The success of the Education Act was anticipated by qualified persons. Mr. Sidney Webb, who was then the Chairman of the Technical Education Board of the London County Council, wrote in the *Daily Mail* of October 17, 1902 :

“Speaking solely from the standpoint of an educationalist, there can be no doubt at all that this Bill will effect the greatest advance in our public education that has been made since the 1870 Act.”

To-day we all know that this prediction has been fulfilled. Yet if Mr. George had had his way, bigotry would have been enthroned and efficiency sent to sacrifice. Since Mr. George has been in politics we have succeeded on his failures, and have always paid dearly for his successes.

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On March 11, 1904, the King's assent was given to the Labour Importation Ordinance for South Africa, and the foundation was laid for the Chinese slavery cry. The Radicals got to work quickly and held a Hyde Park demonstration in the same month. Dr. Clifford attended and gave the movement the blessing of political nonconformity. After that the lie's success was sure.

There was a grave labour shortage in the Transvaal, the position of the country was critical, and the Ordinance had been passed to give the country a chance. White labour in the mines was impossible, but Radical speakers concealed that truth. Their main attack was that we were importing Chinamen to do work which our own people should be doing, and that in order to get Chinamen cheap we were making slaves of them.

The following poster was issued in North Bristol during Mr. Birrell's election in 1906 :

"Forty-eight thousand Chinese bondsmen have been found employment in South Africa by permission of the late Tory Government, while thousands of English cannot get work."

The eagerness with which the cry was caught up is shown by a resolution passed by the Trade Union Congress which was held in Leeds, September 5-10, 1904 :

"That this Congress enters its most em-

phatic protest against the action of His Majesty's Government in sanctioning the South African Labour Ordinance, as it is opposed by His Majesty's subjects at home and abroad, sanctions conditions of labour unfit for human beings, *and is contrary to the anti-slavery traditions of the British Empire.*"

Mr. George was, of course, foremost in propagating the slavery lie. We give some extracts from his speeches.

In Maidenhead on May 26, 1905, he said :

" . . . If you want your thirty millions from us you must give us cheap labour for the mines, and plenty of it. They said that they could not get plenty of Kaffir labour, and they persuaded the Government to consent to the importation of Chinese labour under conditions tantamount to slavery. . . .

"If they commissioned him to bring 10,000 Chinese coolies, plant them in the Welsh mines, put a compound round them—'Heaven forgive me for ever talking of desecrating my hills with slavery!'—feed them on rice soup, the mines would pay 137 per cent. Merionethshire was in the British Empire, he believed, though he sometimes doubted it, when he saw the sort of things the Government did to it. So was Johannesburg; the mere fact that it was thousands of miles away did not in the slightest degree weaken its claims of justice

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and right. It was the British flag in Merionethshire and the same flag in Johannesburg, and if slavery was a stain in the former, why was it not in the latter? If they wanted to have slavery let them try it here at our own doors, and we would rally to see that no such thing occurred. So much for Chinese labour . . .” (*Maidenhead Advertiser*, May 31, 1905).

In Bangor on December 22, 1905, he said :

“ . . . Do you know what that job cost you here in Bangor? £80,000 to begin with. What you could have done with that, if you had £80,000 towards your College? What have you for your College when your £80,000 has been spent on building compounds for slaves in South Africa?” (*Carnarvon and Denbigh Herald*, December 29, 1905).

In Nevin on January 15, 1906, Mr. George said :

“ . . . These people who were trying to use the unemployed statistics of this country in support of a new fiscal system were the very people who introduced 65,000 Chinamen on cheap terms to South Africa, which was as much an integral part of this Empire as Carnarvonshire, under conditions tantamount to slavery. What would they say to introducing Chinamen at a shilling a day to Welsh quarries? The French slate would soon be

swept out of the country . . ." (*Carnarvon and Denbigh Herald*, January 19, 1906).

In Darlington on January 8, 1906, Mr. George said :

" . . . What have they got ?—Chinese labour, Chinese slavery . . ." (*Stockton Herald*, January 13, 1906).

In Leamington on January 11, 1906, Mr. Lloyd George said :

" . . . What is the condition of the Chinese labourer on the Rand ? There *he is, immured in something they call a compound*. He cannot choose his labour ; he cannot come and go freely ; he is practically a prisoner there during his whole year of service. I saw that a candidate last night referred to them as apprentices. Now what an absurd thing to call them so. A high order of service ! I should like to see an apprentice treated like that in this country : not allowed to go out into the streets at all, *confined within* certain limits, and *very narrow limits* ; and not only that, but if he refuses to do a job sent to gaol for two or three months. That is the condition of the Chinese coolie—he is liable, if he refuses to do a job, to be sent to gaol for two or three months. It is perfectly obvious that apparent refusal to do a job may be simply attributable to the fact that the poor fellows do not know what is required of them. I

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will tell you another fact with regard to them. Somebody sent me a report of some convictions for refusing to work—the actual documents signed by the court. How were they described? They were all described by numbers. That is how they describe convicts. Well, that is the condition of things on the Rand with these Chinese. *They are practically slaves*, and to say they are apprentices is simply to degrade the name of apprentice. It has none of the features of apprenticeship, whereas *it has every one of the essentials of slavery*. Here you have *the Union Jack waving over the slave compounds in Africa*, and it is your late member (Mr. A. Lyttleton) who did it" (*Leamington Gazette*, January 13, 1906).

Again at Pwllheli on January 16, 1906 :

" . . . To-day the Union Jack of Johannesburg fluttered in sight of slave compounds. . . . They (the Chinamen) were kept like dogs in a kennel; they were treated as very few men treated their beasts . . ." (*Times*, January 17, 1906).

Now these speeches were wonderful vote-winners. They were backed up by huge cartoons on the hoardings, of Chinamen in chains, and by other pictures with the shades of our dead soldiers and the words, "Was this what we died for?" That slavery should be the

payment of British blood was outrageous to the electors. They rose to the cry. They hounded down those who protested against its untruths, and once again there were cheers for Lloyd George.

Ananias, had he known of it all, must have regretted that he had no chance of being a Radical leader.

For the thing was, from first to last, a nauseating lie. It was so big and embarrassing a lie, that as soon as they had won on it Radical Ministers tumbled over one another to repudiate it.

Before them, however, a voice, which should have claimed attention, had been raised in protest. It was howled down by the men who trusted Mr. George and had been inflamed by his unscrupulous rhetoric.

The Times gave publicity on January 3, 1905, to a statement by Mr. William Evans, the Government adviser on Chinese Labour and late Chief of the Labour Department of Johannesburg. Mr. Evans had been Protector of Chinese in the Straits Settlements for many years. He was a Chinese scholar and spoke fluently in several dialects, and he was a distinguished public servant of the highest integrity. He wrote:

"The treatment of the Chinese is excellent, and the conditions under which they work

should be seen to be believed. They live in big, airy, bright, well-ventilated rooms with all possible conveniences; big kitchens with steam cooking; bath and wash-house open all day, with hot and cold water laid on; lavatories built on most sanitary principles; food first-rate in quality (white rice, fresh beef, vegetables, potatoes, bread, tea) and ample in quantity, and electric light throughout. The rooms are built in the form of a quadrangle, as a rule with the kitchens, &c., in the middle; *but the men are at no time confined to the quad.* They are free to wander about over the mine premises, and they only want a special permit to leave the premises."

As soon as the elections were over, the lie was officially dropped.

In the House of Commons on February 22, 1906, Mr. Winston S. Churchill, Under-Secretary for the Colonies, said:

"... I took occasion during the elections to say, and I repeat it now, that *the conditions of the Transvaal Ordinance under which Chinese labour is now being carried on do not, in my opinion, constitute a state of slavery.* A labour contract into which men enter voluntarily for a limited and for a brief period, under which they are paid wages which they consider adequate, under which they are not bought or sold, and from which they can

obtain relief on payment of £17, 10s., the cost of their passage, might not be a desirable contract, might not be a healthy or proper contract, but *it cannot, in the opinion of His Majesty's Government, be classified as slavery in the extreme acceptance of the word without some risk of terminological inexactitude.* If Chinese labour be not described as slavery, the Rt. Hon. gentleman should not readily assume that it is for that reason a proper contract."—(Authorised Debates, col. 555.)

In the House of Lords, on February 26, 1906, the Earl of Elgin, Secretary for the Colonies, said:

"... Lord Harris has challenged me *with regard to the use of terms connected with slavery. I can only follow my noble friends who spoke on this subject on the occasion of the Address and decline to take any responsibility for the use of that term. I have always declined, as far as I could, to take any responsibility for the creation of these general terms.* I never had much to do with election placards, but it always seemed to me that, *in the endeavour to get a single word which was capable of being represented in large letters on a single sheet of paper, those who drew up those placards ran a risk of doing a grave injustice.* It is not the first time on which these sort of terms have been used. . . . As to pictorial representations, the art of political

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caricature, in the hand of a master, fascinates the victim even while it attacks him. In the hands of another, it becomes a bludgeon which is as likely to injure friend as foe. *I wish to express my deep regret—I have no hesitation in using that word—that this term has been used, for two particular reasons. In the first place, I regret exceedingly to find that men who have fought for us and suffered for us in the colony should think that their personal honour is impugned. I cannot believe any reasonable man, even in the heat of an election contest, ever meant anything of the kind. But if he did, it only shows how important it is in these matters to observe the rule that, while we may challenge any system, we are not entitled to condemn an individual except on clear and specific proof. In the second place, I especially regret this incident because it might possibly seem to raise a suspicion that there was a difference of opinion between the two sides of the House and the two parties of the country on the great question of slavery itself. I do not believe that for a moment. I believe that all parties adhere to the proud boast that slavery cannot exist under the British flag.”—*(Authorised Debates, vol. clvi., col. 735.)

So much for the Chinese slavery lie and the ignoble part which Mr. George took in its circulation.

It is well to remember. Leaders are only fallible, like the rest of men, but those who would enjoy public confidence must, at heart, give proof of common honesty.

And of all the wicked misstatements on which Mr. George filched the workers' votes, he has withdrawn none.

He has merely remained silent in the hope that the people will forget.

But untruth in public men is a thing which should never be forgotten.

CHAPTER VIII

OLD AGE PENSIONS

IN December 1905, Mr. Lloyd George was appointed President of the Board of Trade, and he held that office until April 1908, when he went to the Exchequer.

There had been nothing in Mr. George's career to suggest that he would be a sound administrator, and there has been nothing in his subsequent work to justify his appointment. His methods have been the reverse of businesslike. His usual plan is to come to a decision first and find reasons for that decision afterwards. His administrative acts, like his rhetorical conclusions, are usually a bid to the gallery.

It is unnecessary to review events during his tenure of office. It goes without saying that he has always thrust himself into the limelight. At the Board of Trade he secured almost daily advertisement from the reception of deputations. If space permitted, his speeches to the various gentlemen who waited on him would make interesting reading.

They all went happy away, but their happiness was, in the majority of cases, short-lived, and they realised before long that flattering phrases was all that Mr. George had for them.

In 1908 the Old Age Pensions Bill brought the Chancellor of the Exchequer well to the front of the stage. Radicals, nowadays, claim the exclusive credit for this measure. As a matter of fact, the ground had been prepared, public opinion had been formed, and a mass of evidence had been collected by the Unionist Party ever since the year 1892. In 1894, indeed, an Old Age Provident Pensions Bill was defeated by the then Radical Government by 205 votes to 136. In 1896 the Conservative Government appointed a Select Committee which examined over 100 schemes and compiled a volume of valuable information. In 1898 a second Committee was appointed, which did important work.

The Radical measure of 1908, imperfect as it was, would have been impossible had it not been for the patient inquiry and preparation of their predecessors. Indeed, speaking in the House of Commons on June 15, 1908, Mr. George paid the following tribute :

" . . . The statesman who, on the whole, has done more to popularise the question of

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Old Age Pensions in this country than anyone else, I mean the Rt. Hon. gentleman, the Member for West Birmingham, Mr. Joseph Chamberlain."—(Authorised Debates, col. 566.)

Lord Wolverhampton, who was the Radical President of the Privy Council, paid a similar tribute in a speech which he made on July 20, 1908, in the House of Lords. He said :

"Of all the living statesmen who had taken a great interest in Old Age Pensions, Mr. Chamberlain stood out most distinctly as the person who had popularised the question."—(*The Times*, July 21, 1908.)

The Radical *Daily Chronicle* went further than this. In its issue of June 17, 1908, there appeared the following :

"Let us be just and admit that the popularising of the idea of Old Age Pensions and the forcing of it into the sphere of practical politics have been in large measure due to Mr. Chamberlain."

The scheme itself which Mr. George introduced was a characteristic example of crude and hurried legislation. The *Star*, in its issue of June 12, 1908, admitted this. The *Star* said :

"It is necessary to point out that the whole thing is a bold experiment, a leap in the dark, the cost of which is largely guesswork."

Mr. Asquith, too, in the speech which he delivered in Birmingham on June 19, 1908, admitted that :

“You can get a thousand cases of hardship out of it [the Old Age Pensions Scheme]. There is the limit of age. It is hard that a man of sixty-nine should not get a pension, while the man of seventy does. There is the limitation of income. It is very hard that the man who has got 11s. a week should not get a pension, whereas the man who has got 10s. a week does. . . . Cases of hardship could be multiplied indefinitely.”

This was Mr. George's first adventure as a social legislator. As he has always done subsequently, he produced his scheme first and set out to get information about it afterwards. *Punch*, in its issue of August 26, 1908, happily hit off the situation :

“Mr. Lloyd George's object in visiting Berlin, it is officially declared, is to obtain information about Old Age Pensions. Now that his recommendation to grant the pensions has been adopted, he naturally feels that he ought seriously to study the subject.”

The Unionist Party in the House tried hard to improve the pension scheme, but they were out-voted. Their amendment to prevent out-door relief from disqualifying old people for pensions was defeated by

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249 votes to 144. As the result, more than 200,000 aged poor were debarred from pensions. Mr. George was profoundly unsympathetic to this amendment. Speaking in the House of Commons on June 29, 1908, he said :

"He was not quite sure that even if the financial arrangement admitted of the amendment being adopted, the addition of 203,000 out-door paupers to the pension list was yet a proper mode of proceeding. It was part of the Poor Law system, and should be dealt with in the form of that system."—(*The Times*, June 30, 1908.)

Many other amendments were moved by the Unionist Party to improve the Pensions Bill, but they were rejected by the Radical vote.

Whenever Mr. George produces a social reform measure, one is left in doubt as to whether his chief aim is not to get votes rather than to achieve good. Certainly the base uses to which the Pensions Act was put by the Radical Party gave cause for apprehension on this point. Appeals were issued to those who were qualified to receive pensions to register their names at Radical Party offices in the country. Even after these tactics had been trenchantly exposed in the House, the methods were only reluctantly abandoned.

The next move was to circulate the election lie that if the Unionist Party were returned to power they would discontinue Old Age Pensions. The Lord Advocate of Scotland, Mr. Ure, was prominent in giving wide currency to this fabrication, and Mr. Balfour took him to task in the House of Commons. The following sentence from Mr. Balfour's speech on September 29, 1909, should dispose of that matter once and for all :

"The national obligation to pay the Old Age Pensions under the Act of 1908 is one which no party or no Government would violate if they could or could if they would."

And on October 3, 1909, the Prime Minister, Mr. Asquith, cold-shouldered Mr. Ure and those who had been helping him to spread the lie by announcing :

"I do not share the apprehensions—if they are entertained anywhere—of the willingness or even of the personal ability of the Tory Party opposite to take away these pensions. . . . I think the Old Age Pensioner may sleep peacefully in his bed."

Enormous play was made on the Old Age Pensions in the elections of 1910 and 1911. The whole of the credit was claimed by the Radical Party, and the attitude of the Unionist Party was scandalously misrepresented. There is no doubt that the pensions, to a large ex-

tent, enabled the Radicals to win those two elections. Are they going to attempt to win the next on the same cry? Surely if anyone pays twice for goods delivered, they have paid enough—some would say once too often. The electors have twice voted for the Radicals because of the pensions, and the account should be considered settled.

CHAPTER IX

"THE PEOPLE'S BUDGET" AND LIMEHOUSE

MR. LLOYD GEORGE introduced his now notorious budget on April 29, 1909. It is important to remember that at that time Radicalism was out of favour with the country. Bye-elections had been going against the Government. There was a vast amount of unemployment and grave and general discontent. On the other hand, Conservatism was gaining rapid ground, and there can be little doubt that Radical electioneers were apprehensive over the progress of the movement in favour of tariffs. One would hesitate to say that the budget of 1909 was purposely formulated to side-track the tariff movement, but there can be little question that that result was one of the ends which the Government had in view.

At the same time the Government was beating up for a final onslaught on the House of Lords, and though they probably did not anticipate the action which the Upper House ultimately took with regard to the budget,

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they must have been aware that an onslaught upon lords and landlords would be a useful preliminary to the great political encounter. It is customary to condemn Mr. George for his budget speeches. That seems to be unfair. Anyone who knew the man must have known that they were the only kind of speeches he would make. No one can have known this better than his colleagues in the Cabinet. He was the last man alive who should have been entrusted with this work had there been any desire whatever to have acted fairly, judiciously, and decently.

The following extract from a speech which Mr. George delivered at Swansea on October 1, 1908, even if it stood alone, which it did not, should have warned the Prime Minister that Mr. George was not the man who should have been entrusted with the financial adjustment of the taxes over the various sections of the community :

“ I have had some excruciating letters piled upon me, more especially during the last year or two, from people whose cases I have investigated—honest workmen thrown out of work, tramping the streets and from town to town, from one workshop to another, begging for work as they would for charity, and at the end of the day trudging home tired, disheartened, and empty-handed, to be greeted

by the faces of their little ones, haggard and pinched with starvation and anxiety. The day will come, and that day is not distant, when this country will shudder at its toleration of that state of things when it was rolling in wealth. I say again that, apart from its inhumanity and its essential injustice, it is robbery; it is confiscation of what is the workman’s share of the riches of the land. . . .

“You might imagine, from the vain, furious talk which is being indulged in, more especially by peers and their apologists, that these rich mineral deposits were brought here at the time of the Norman Conquest by the ancestors of some of our great landlords, that they were placed in these convenient spots near the coast by those dukes and earls and barons after they had stolen the commons from the people. . . . No one can really honestly defend the present system. All classes are not taking their fair share of the burden of trade depression. I can name twelve men, and so can you—for it is no Exchequer secret—whose aggregate income during the worst days of depression would suffice to maintain in comfort during the whole of one month at least 50,000 workmen and their families; and yet you probably find these twelve men on a Tariff Reform platform proclaiming that the distress incidental to unemployment is entirely attri-

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butable to the fact that the bread of the workman is still untaxed. Think of it! Think of it! 250,000 men and women and children could live on the income that these twelve men would receive during the worst period of trade depression, and receive without ever earning it. I am not one of those who advocate confiscation, and, at any rate, as far as I am concerned, honest capital put in honest industries for the development of the industry, the trade, and the commerce of this country, will have nothing to fear from any proposal I shall ever be responsible for submitting to the Parliament of this realm. But I do, without fear of misrepresentation, say that the first charge, say, on the great natural resources of this country, ought to be the maintenance above want of all those who are giving their labour and brain and muscle to its cultivation and development. . . ."—(*Daily News*, October 2, 1908.)

Then again there was the striking announcement made by Mr. George in the House of Commons on June 29, 1908 :

"I have no nest-eggs at all. I have got to rob somebody's hen-roosts next year. I am on the look-out which will be the easiest to get and where I shall be least punished, and where I shall get the most eggs; and not only that, but where they can be most easily

spared, which is one important qualification.”—(Official Debates, *Times* report, June 30, 1908.)

We admit that the Exchequer was in need of money. We admit that, to a party limited by free imports, severe budget exactions were the only available method of relief. Yet, at the same time, unless the imposition was to be vindictive and malignant, it should have been made by some other person—almost any other person than Mr. George.

His budget campaign was characterised by unfailing bad taste and even worse economics. As we might expect of him, he posed as the saviour of the human race, and his proposals were accompanied with rhetorical promises of an earthly paradise. The concluding words of the speech in which he introduced the budget on April 29, 1909, were merely a mild foretaste of what was to follow in later efforts. He said :

“Mr. Emmott, this is a war budget. It is a budget for waging implacable warfare against poverty, and I cannot help hoping and believing that before this generation has passed away we shall have made a great advance towards the good time when poverty, with the wretchedness and squalor and human degradation which always follow in its camp, will be as remote from the people of this

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country as the wolves which once infested its forests."

If the budget was a campaign against poverty, the enemy has triumphed in every engagement. The budget has bred poverty and in no way has healed it. Another of the dazzling promises to the poor by which support was won for the budget, was made in the Limehouse speech on July 30, 1909. Mr. George then said :

"The budget, as your chairman has already so well reminded you, is introduced not merely for the purpose of raising barren taxes, but taxes that are fertile taxes, taxes that will bring forth fruit—the security of the country, which is paramount in the minds of all—the provision for the aged and deserving poor—it was time it was done. It is rather a shame for a rich country like ours, probably the richest country in the world, if not the richest the world has ever seen, that it should allow those who have toiled all their days to end in penury and possibly starvation. It is rather hard that an old workman should have to find his way to the gates of the tomb, bleeding and foot-sore through the brambles and thorns of poverty. We cut a new path through it. An easier one, and pleasanter one through fields of waving corn."

That was in 1909; we now live in 1913.

The budget has been tried and proved. It was passed on the pledge made to poor men of a relief from poverty, and the only result it has given has been to increase the number of those who suffer.

It will be remembered that the fight on the budget largely ranged over the land clauses. Mr. George lost no opportunity of inflaming the cupidity of the landless men and of marshalling them against the landlords. According to a parliamentary paper, No. 147, of 1909, the official estimate by the Chancellor of the Exchequer of the land value duties promised a return of £500,000 for the year 1909-10. There was no estimate for the following year, but there was a footnote which announced :

“There will be a progressive increase in the yield of these duties in 1910-11 and future years, but definite figures cannot be given until some progress has been made with the work of valuation.”

In all the history of budgets no more pitiable fiasco can be found than Mr. George’s estimate of these duties.

In a letter to *The Times* on February 7, 1912, Mr. Pretyma, M.P., called attention to the fact that in eighteen months the land taxes had only produced £20,000, and that they had actually cost the country considerably over

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half a million. The public had been gulled into giving their votes to the budget on the assurance that this taxation would produce £500,000 in the first year and larger sums in every successive year. As a matter of fact, the taxation, so far from producing anything at all, has cost the country £480,000. In his budget speech on April 2, 1912, Mr. George took up an amazing position. He defended the Undeveloped Land Duty and the Increment Duty, and he asserted :

“That he had made it clear from the first that the productivity of the latter would not be apparent in the first years.”

Where had he made it clear ? What speech had he delivered during his budget campaign in which he gave a warning that there would be no productivity in early years ? On the contrary, he actually laid stress on the financial results that would immediately accrue.

In the House of Commons, on April 29, 1912, Mr. Lloyd George announced :

“The net receipts of Increment Value Duty and Undeveloped Land Duty to March 31, 1912, was £6251 and £31,293 respectively.”

The question, of course, very seriously presents itself as to how far so small an amount repays collection, and whether it is not eaten up again and again by the salaries of officials engaged.

The failure of the land taxes has not been sufficiently realised. The public loved them. They were told that the wicked landlord was going to be taxed, and that the money from the taxes would be used to make life happier for the people. They actually believed that although the land was to be taxed, more land would come into the market for building, that there would be a glut of new houses, and that rents would fall. The truth is very different. The land taxes imposed by the Radical budget of 1909 have not forced building land into the market, and have not caused an increased supply of houses.

The *Board of Trade Labour Gazette* issues quarterly statements of the value of buildings for which plans have been passed by the principal urban districts. These returns afford the best indication of the progress of building in and around towns. These returns expose the complete failure of the land taxes. Instead of increased building, there has been a steady decline. In the period, March to September 1909—six months—plans for dwelling-houses were passed of the value of over £220 per thousand of the population. In the first six months of 1912, the value of plans passed was only about £114 per thousand of the population—a fall of no less than 48 per cent. Taking all classes of buildings, houses,

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shops, factories, churches, chapels, schools, &c., there has been a decline of 24 per cent. in the same period.

Even Mr. Josiah Wedgewood, the Radical Member of Parliament, who has made so strenuous a fight for Mr. George in the past, has stated of the Increment Duty on land that:

"It may well be buried without any regret on the part of even moderate land-taxers. Looked at from the mere Treasury point of view, there is no money in it. Something of the same sort may be said of the other Land Value Duties as imposed in 1909. They were only a make-shift at first—they are only a nuisance now."—(Page 392, *Economical Journal*, September 1912.)

Yes, but they were a make-shift to catch votes, and to whom are they a nuisance? They may be a nuisance to those who have to find the money and who are being harried by Mr. George's horde of well-paid officials, but they are something worse than a nuisance to the great army of men who depend for their very livelihood on the building trade. The bricklayers, builders, masons, carpenters, and joiners—these are the men who have to pay, in the form of unemployment or short-time and haphazard wages, and pay dearly, for Mr. Lloyd George's great political adventure.

Of course, if we are content to have as our Chancellor of the Exchequer a man who has less knowledge of economics than a school child, we must be prepared for disaster. Mr. George never really argued the case for his new land taxes: he merely indulged in wild invective against landlords and in rhetorical promises of a very good time coming for the crowd.

He made a speech at Cardiff (December 1911) and said this:

"The great lesson of Christianity is this. You cannot redeem those who are below except by the sacrifice of those who are above. . . . One-fourth of the population of this country are living under conditions of poverty. Is it because the country could not maintain them or because the land is poor? The national income is eighteen hundred millions—£200 a year for every family."

Put into plain English, that statement comes to this:

"You are very poor people. If the idle rich did not get what you should have, there is enough money for all families to have £200 a year."

The effect of such a deliverance on the crowd can well be imagined.

The actual statistical truth is very different. Sir Robert Giffen, who was perhaps the

greatest statistician our country has ever known, estimated that if the income from capital were divided amongst the population it would work out at £39, 7s. 5d. per head in England and at £14, 6s. 0d. in Ireland. But Sir Robert Giffen would have been the last to suggest that if the present system of production and distribution were abandoned, and if individual incentive were removed, there would be anything like that amount of capital available for distribution. In this £200 a year declaration, Mr. George identifies himself with the position taken up by the scatter-brained socialist stump-orators of the past. If he had even thought for a moment, he must have realised how wrong his facts were, and he must also have been convinced that a statement of that kind should never fall from the lips of a man in a responsible position.

In our social life there should always be periodical readjustments; new forces come into being, and new conditions have to be met. The presence of enormous wealth, side by side with heart-rending poverty, presents not one problem, but a series of problems to thinkers. But Mr. George has never faced any of them seriously or honestly. He has merely sought on every occasion to make platform capital out of the facts—the facts which he distorts for his own purposes—and

he has actually exploited suffering and need in order to win votes. He has never even outlined any proposal which would not actually accentuate the evils which he professes to be anxious to redress. All his schemes undermine capital and are injurious to production and the producer. They are the schemes of a man who has not thought and does not think. They are the schemes of one who is without knowledge and wholly without judgment, and their effect has, up to the present, been so deplorable that the continuance of Mr. George in a position of responsibility is nothing short of a standing menace to the nation.

The foundations of national progress are set in goodwill and are framed on compromise. Social readjustment, under which one section of the community must concede increased advantages to other sections, can only be brought about in a spirit of justice. The other way is that of revolution. But revolutions have a knack of producing, ultimately, less favourable conditions than existed before. Mr. Lloyd George was the revolution man. His methods were those of the revolutionary. His budget speeches in the country were deliberately framed to embitter the people and bring about a class war. We shall give extracts from them. They are

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speeches which should not be forgotten. They reek of vindictiveness and malevolence, and are built up on promises which have subsequently been broken. It is well that the people should have these speeches before them. They are the masterpieces of the strife-maker, but even more than that, they are the rhetorical records of complete failure. Their pledges have been unfulfilled. The scheme of the budget itself has been in many respects a fiasco, and in others an engine of misery for masses of the people. Those are results which can be traced and proved, but their other effect, the evil that has accrued from the bitterness which Mr. George fomented between class and class, the result of that is hidden away in the hearts of the people. It may even yet have its harvest of disaster. We shall see.

Mr. George's attitude towards the men of sound judgment who by their finance have done so much to build up the country, is illustrated by the speech which he made at the Holborn Restaurant on June 24, 1909. He said :

"Now really I should like to know is Lord Rothschild the dictator of this country? Are we really to have all the ways of reform, financial and social, blocked simply by a notice board, 'No Thoroughfare, by order of

Nathaniel Rothschild’ ? There are countries where they have made it perfectly clear that they are not going to have their policy dictated merely by great financiers, and if this sort of thing goes on this country will join the rest of them.”

This is a typical illustration of Mr. George’s tactics. He attacks a single man, whom he holds up to represent all other men, and he imagines that by drenching that single man with ridicule he has disposed of that man and all the others whom that man stands for. Even more than that, he believes that he has satisfactorily dealt with the arguments which those men advance. As a matter of fact, with regard to the budget, and most other matters as well, events have proved the soundness of Lord Rothschild’s judgment, and Mr. George himself must know that Lord Rothschild, in his political and social views, is advanced. Few men have so broad and generous an outlook upon life as Lord Rothschild has, and few men would go so far as he goes in the matter of readjustment of social and economical relations. This is a widely-known fact, and Mr. George must know it. The knowledge of it, however, did not for an instant debar him from holding up Lord Rothschild’s name to the contempt of the crowd, who were less well informed.

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The notorious Limehouse speech was delivered on July 30, 1909. The question of building more Dreadnoughts was a prominent one at the time, and Mr. George made characteristic play of it. He began :

"A few months ago a meeting was held not far from this hall, in the heart of the City of London, demanding that the Government should launch out and run into enormous expenditure on the navy. That meeting ended up with a resolution promising that those who passed that resolution would give financial support to the Government in their undertaking. There have been two or three meetings held in the City of London since, attended by the same class of people, but not ending up with a resolution promising to pay. On the contrary, we are spending the money that they won't pay. What has happened since to alter their tone? Simply that we have sent in the bill. We started our four Dreadnoughts. They cost eight millions of money. We promised them four more; they cost another eight millions. Somebody has got to pay, and these gentlemen say: 'Perfectly true, somebody has got to pay, but we would rather that somebody were somebody else.' We started building. We wanted money to pay for the building, so we sent the hat round. We sent it round amongst the work-

men and the miners of Derbyshire and Yorkshire, the weavers of High Peak, and the Scotchmen of Dumfries, who, like all their countrymen, know the value of money. They all brought in their coppers. We went round Belgravia, but there has been such a howl ever since that it has completely deafened us.”

This, be it remembered, was a speech delivered in Limehouse to poor men. If ever there was a case of class being wickedly set against class, here it is to be found. That Mr. George’s complaint was utterly groundless and untrue did not for a moment matter. Speaking to some of the poorest of our people, he went out of his way to vilify those who had means. It was a move in the class war. There is a sentence in the next passage of the Limehouse speech which, if there is any justice in politics, or any nemesis for false leaders, should bring Mr. George to the political gallows. We quote it :

“Deception is always a pretty contemptible vice, but to deceive the poor is the meanest of all crimes.”

Mr. George’s political career has been one long, unbroken, flagrant deception of the poor. He deceived them in his first election address twenty-three years ago, for none of the pledges which it contains have as yet been fulfilled. He deceived them again in

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his campaign against the Agricultural Rates Relief Act, and also in the case of Mr. Balfour's Education Act, both of which were measures which were passed when he was in opposition, and which have been continued in force when he and his Government have been in power. He deceived them again in the matter of the budget by promising them an earthly paradise, and giving them in exchange greater misery than was their portion before; and particularly by promising them relief from local rates, and by misappropriating the fund thus definitely ear-marked, for the relief of Exchequer embarrassments. He deceived them scandalously by his wild pledges of what the land taxation would produce, and has only given them in return what is in some districts something like a house famine, and in no districts lower rates. He deceived them again, every section of them, a thousand times over, in the matter of the Insurance Act, and there he made them, whether they liked it or not, directly pay for their own deception. One clings to the hope that in politics one may be charitable, but if at this moment Mr. George's political epitaph had to be written, truth would engrave upon his tombstone the words, "He deceived the poor."

Now we give a typical illustration of Mr. Lloyd George's attack upon landlords:

“Who is the landlord? The landlord is a gentleman—I have not a word to say about him in his personal capacity—who does not earn his wealth. He does not even take the trouble to receive his wealth. He has a host of agents and clerks that receive for him. He does not even take the trouble to spend his wealth. He has a host of people around him to do the actual spending for him. He never sees it till he comes to enjoy it. His sole function, his chief pride, is stately consumption of wealth produced by others. What about the doctor’s income? How does the doctor earn his income? The doctor is a man who visits our homes when they are darkened with the shadow of death. His skill, his trained courage, his genius, bring hope out of the grip of despair, win life out of the fangs of the Great Destroyer; all blessings upon him and his divine art of healing that mends bruised bodies and anxious hearts. To compare the reward which he gets for that labour with the wealth which pours into the pocket of the landlord, purely owing to the possession of his monopoly, is a piece of insolence which no intelligent community will tolerate.”

This was in 1909. Within three years’ time Mr. George had changed his attitude towards the doctors. He had no more blessings for

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them. They were no longer the divine healers, but they were a horrible nuisance. They wanted fair play under the Insurance Act, and he wanted the Insurance Act, and did not care a rap about fair play. In 1913, too, he had altered his attitude with regard to the landlords. Speaking on January 4, 1910, at the St. Pancras Baths, he had said of the landlords:

"We will give the great landlords a turn on the wheel, and put them on the treadmill for a short time, and see how they like it."

But by 1913 he had modified his view, and, speaking in the House of Commons on March 8, he confessed:

"I do not think it is a question of attacking any class or of criticising any class."

The truth is that the country had found Mr. George out, and the landlords, whom he had attacked in the budget days, had vilified and falsely accused, were not without their defenders. What easier than to attempt to disarm an opponent by announcing that there is no quarrel? Surely that is quite as easy to accomplish as it was to denounce in 1913 the doctors whom in 1910 he had applauded.

We give another scandalous passage from the Limehouse speech. Mr. George was still attacking the great landlords, and he was speaking about colliers. He imagines that he

is in the presence of some of the capitalists who receive coal royalties, and this is the conversation which finds a place in the speech:

“‘Here, you know these poor fellows who have been digging up royalties at the risks of their lives. Some of them are old. They have survived the perils of their trade. They are broken. They can earn no more. Won’t you give something towards keeping them out of the workhouse?’ They scowl at you and we say, ‘Only a halfpenny, just a copper.’ They say, ‘You thieves.’ And they turn their dogs on to us, and every day you can hear them bark.

“If this is an indication of the view taken by these great landlords of their responsibility to the people who, at the risk of life, create their wealth, then I say their day of reckoning is at hand.”

The suggestion in that passage was that the tax on royalties was to be distributed by the Government amongst the men who got the coal. There is not a collier in the kingdom who has had a single farthing out of the royalties under the budget, or is ever likely to get one. No one knew this better than Mr. George—no one knows this better than the colliers. But Limehouse did not know it. And Limehouse cheered, and Mr. George had

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a delightful evening. But is that statesmanship? Is it even common honesty?

His concluding passage can give him no pleasure nowadays if he rereads it. We will give him the opportunity:

"We are placing the burdens on the broad shoulders. Why should I put burdens on the people? I am one of the children of the people. I was brought up amongst them. I know their trials, and God forbid that I should add one grain of trouble to the anxiety which they bear with such patience and fortitude. . . . I made up my mind in framing the budget which was in front of me that, at any rate, no cupboard should be bared, no lot would be harder to bear. By that test, I challenge them to judge the budget."

Mr. George's intentions may have been admirable, but they have failed. The taxation under the budget has, as all the economists predicted would be the case, fallen ultimately upon the people. Its effect on employment has, in many trades, been grave, but in nothing except in the provision of officialdom has it been helpful. By the budget many a cupboard has been bared, and many a lot has been made harder to bear. The budget itself is an economic outrage which could only have been accepted by the people if advocated, as it was, by a first-class political cheap-jack.

That Mr. George should ever have been Chancellor of the Exchequer of the British Empire is a sorry jest. We perhaps should congratulate ourselves that the budget of a man with an inadequate equipment has not proved to be more disastrous than has been the case. But nothing in all the world will condone the class antagonism which he did his utmost to engender.

Mr. George spoke at Carnarvon on December 9, 1909, and embraced the opportunity of having a further attack on the landlords. He was talking of the new land taxes and the landlords, and this is what he said:

“We say the country has need of money, and we are looking out for somebody to tax. We do not want to tax food; we will tax no man’s raiment; we will not tax the house that shelters him and his family. What shall we tax? We do not want to tax industry; we do not want to tax enterprise; we do not want to tax commerce. What shall we tax? We will tax the man who is getting something that he never earned, that he never produced, and that by no law of justice and fairness ought ever to belong to him.”

No avowed Socialist could have stated the point more strongly, and Mr. George himself seemed to be content with it, because he devoted the greater part of the conclusion of

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his oration to wild promises of the results of the budget. Here is one of them:

"We are raising money by means that make it no more difficult for men to live. We are raising it for making provision for hundreds of thousands of workmen in the country who have nothing between them and starvation in old age except the charity of the parish. We propose a great scheme in order to set up a fund in this country that will see that no man suffers hunger in the dark days of sickness, breakdown in health, and unemployment which visit so many of us."

This was the sort of rhetoric which Mr. George used up and down the country to win support for the budget. The electors have not gained their paradise. But what does that matter? Mr. George got their votes.

On October 9, Mr. George spoke at Newcastle. The speech was a long one, and perhaps more inaccurate in its details than any other that he delivered. It is interesting as showing that Mr. George, at that period, believed it was less necessary to defend the budget than to attack the Lords. After asking a series of questions with regard to the peers, he announced:

"The answers are charged with peril for the order of things the peers represent, but they are fraught with rare and refreshing fruit

for the parched lips of the multitude who have been treading the dusty road along which the people have marched through the dark ages which are now emerging into the light."

Well, the peers have gone, so far as their power in politics is concerned, and what have the people got in return? Where is the rare and refreshing fruit, and in what way has the budget helped anyone along the dusty road or brought them into the light? It is well that these wild statements should be kept in remembrance. Votes were won on them, and if Mr. George is to remain in politics we are sure to have similar deceptive nonsense in the time to come. If we place in one column the actual results of the budget, and in the other extracts from Mr. George's speeches similar to that which we have just given, it would not be the budget alone that would be condemned. Mr. George would receive his just reward of reprobation.

CHAPTER X

THE INSURANCE ACT

THE National Insurance Bill was introduced into the House of Commons by the Chancellor of the Exchequer on May 4, 1911. In his opening sentences Mr. George said :

"I think it must be a relief to members to turn from controversial questions for a moment to a question which, at any rate, has never been the subject of controversy between the parties of the State. I believe there is general agreement as to the evil which has to be remedied. I believe that there is general agreement as to its basis, and I think I can even say there is general agreement as to the many principles on which the remedy ought to be based."

This was a characteristic beginning. In this matter "of general agreement" the wish was father to the thought. It is quite true, however, that all parties in the House of Commons were anxious to put on the Statute Book a sound scheme of insurance, and if Mr. George had been less Mr. George and more of a statesman, had been less of the

autocrat in a hurry, and more genuinely anxious to avail himself of the help and counsel of all, he might have secured for the nation a measure which would have been a boon and a blessing. The bill was given a second reading on May 29 without opposition. It then went into Committee. That, of course, was the opportunity for criticism of details. That criticism was forthcoming from all quarters of the House, and Mr. George did not resent it. Speaking on August 4, he said :

“We have now had twelve days in Committee, but I think that the progress that has been made has been very satisfactory on the whole. The debates have not been controversial in character. If I may be allowed to say so, I think that the Committee have responded to the invitation of the Government, that the House as a whole should take part in moulding and fashioning the bill.”

On the same occasion he added :

“In view of the alterations made, I think, on the whole, they are improvements to the bill. I say quite candidly that these criticisms on both sides of the House have been exceedingly helpful, and the alterations have been toward the improvement of the bill. I have received very valuable assistance from members of all parties.”

That was the position of affairs when the

House of Commons rose. It seems as if Mr. Lloyd George had realised that his task was a gigantic one, that its success was far from being assured, and that his only chance was to disarm opposition by welcoming criticism. But during the summer recess the country had a good deal to say, and the country spoke with two voices. First there were those who acclaimed Mr. George as being the saviour of the human race, and who welcomed his proposals as being good for the country and excellent for the Radical Party prospects. One cannot help feeling that when these expressions of opinion were showered upon the Chancellor he must have deplored the fact that a bill which so many of his friends assured him would make the fortunes of his party, had been introduced by him to the House of Commons as a non-party measure.

But while a section of the people were loudly cheering their Lloyd George, another section were quietly at work examining the provisions of the bill and voicing their opposition. During the summer recess the critics had time for thought and preparation, and the numberless pages of amendments which were set down must have come as a rude awakening to the Chancellor. What, then, did he do? Just before the House rose he had welcomed Unionist criticism and had expressed his gratitude for Unionist amend-

ments. Immediately the House reassembled he dramatically changed his policy. He rushed to the guillotine. The Government, at his bidding, determined to stifle discussion in the House and drive the bill through. Thus it happened that for the Report stage of the whole bill, including ten schedules, only five days were allotted. Not one of the seventy-seven clauses of Part I. of the bill was open to consideration, although there were over 700 amendments down on the paper. Out of these 700 amendments some 470 were Government amendments, and they were inserted in the bill without a word of discussion.

When we come to Part II. of the bill, the unemployment insurance portion, on the Report stage, 16 out of 25 clauses were passed without discussion, under the guillotine.

Part III. of the bill and the greater part of the schedules were also not discussed at all.

So when the third reading of the bill was pressed on December 6, 1911, the following resolution was moved on behalf of the Unionist Party:

“That, while approving the objects of National Insurance, this House is of the opinion that under Part I. of the bill the public funds and individual contributions will not be used to the best advantage of those most closely affected, and that, as the bill has been neither adequately discussed in this House, nor fully

explained to the country, and would in its present form be unequal in its operation, steps should be taken to enable further consideration of Part I. to be resumed next session, and, in the meanwhile, to have the draft regulations published."

This resolution was rejected by the Radical Party, and the bill was sent up to the House of Lords on December 6. And much to the annoyance of Mr. George's democratic supporters in the country, the Lords passed the bill. It is possible that the Lords had come to the conclusion that the nation would not really appreciate Mr. Lloyd George until they had paid for him.

Probably there is no other man alive who would have dreamt of rushing through a national insurance bill. At least, we hope so. We trust, too, that no other man who has pretensions to be known as a statesman, will ever attempt again to subvert the social and industrial conditions of the whole nation without first making prolonged and elaborate inquiries. Mr. George, it is true, claims that he devoted three years to the work. We believe that the German statesman devoted thirty. The problem was a difficult one. It was immense. The bill would affect everybody. And nearly everybody would have to pay. Surely, when compulsion is used against

a whole nation, the utmost possible care should be taken to provide that that which the people are compelled to pay for is the thing which the people want. But there was another grave feature in the problem. Years and years before Mr. George or anyone else in politics gave a thought to national insurance, a magnificent work had been carried on by voluntary agencies. The history of the Friendly Society movement is a thrilling one. It is the story of men who spent the whole of their days throughout the years of their life in toil, and who yet were found willing to devote evening after evening to the work of succouring their less fortunate friends. The Friendly Society movement was a purely working-class movement. By courage, resolution, and devotion it passed from its humble beginnings into a great scheme with widespread blessings for the people of the land. We only see the fringe of the Friendly Society movement if we think of sick pay and the actual relief given. The inspiration which uplifted its founders, and which has impelled, and to-day does impel, its leaders and workers, is the life-breath of citizen duty and of brotherly love. A man who imperils a glorious movement of this kind in order to advance an ill-considered scheme of his own, is a man who should for ever after be stripped of power. The extent of evil which Mr. George has dealt

to the Friendly Society movement cannot yet be fully estimated. There can be no question, however, that in far too many cases he has degraded Friendly Society lodges from their high duties of brotherhood into mere agencies for the paying and receiving of sick funds.

Of course, he foresaw that Friendly Society men would fight to the last for their order. In the first sentences of the speech in which he introduced the bill, he had pleasant words for them. He said:

"All the agencies which deal with sickness or unemployment are of a thoroughly unselfish and beneficent character, and we shall be able, I think, to assist them, not merely without interfering with their rights and privileges, but by encouraging them to do the excellent work which they have commenced, and which they are doing so well."

Again, addressing the National Conference of Friendly Societies at the Hearts of Oak Buildings, Euston Road, on June 29, 1911, he said:

"He would not put his hand to any bill which would interfere with the beneficent operation of the Friendly Societies. Anything which would interfere with the utility of their careers would be a great public disaster."

—(*The Times*, June 30, 1911.)

In movements which number many hun-

dreds of thousands of men, there must always be found some members who are pushful and self-seeking, and care more for their own advancement in life than for the interests which have been committed to their care. The grave charge which the Friendly Societies passionately make against the Chancellor is, that he bargained with some of their leaders with a sheaf of false pledges in the one hand, and a bundle of promises of appointments to remunerative posts under the Act in the other. Many of the leaders have been splendidly true to the men. Some of the leaders have misled the men, have played for their own hand, and have received the reward which was promised them. Certain it is that the Friendly Societies have been treated with scandalous injustice, and that their movement, in many of its essentials, has been gravely imperilled. I am not at all sure that the same words must not be written with regard to the Trade Unions as well.

And what about the doctors? In the speech in which he introduced the bill we find the following passage:

"The doctor is a very great sufferer indeed. I do not think it is right that we should do our charity at the expense of a hard-worked profession."

Every doctor who read that must have patted himself on the back, and have assured himself

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that a good time was at last coming. But when the doctors, like the Friendly Societies, came to examine details, they found all was not well. And when they came to tell the Chancellor that all was not well, he set to work with matchless cunning to play one off against the other. His attitude to the doctors, at any rate, underwent a great change. But they were still the same doctors. They were still "divine healers," and I suppose they were still "suffering." But when they wanted something to which they believed they were entitled, and which it was not convenient for Mr. George to give them, he no longer said:

"I do not think it right that we should do our charity at the expense of the doctors."

But he deplored with a magnificent show of indignation what he called the "sick-room wrangle."

In his Birmingham speech on July 11, 1911, he announced:

"I had two hours' discussion with the medical men themselves the other day. I do not think there has been anything like it since the day when Daniel went into the lions' den. I was on the dissecting-table for two hours, but I can assure you they treated me with the same civility that the lions treated my illustrious predecessor. You must remember this discussion about what they ought to be paid

is an old one. I cannot say that I care very much for this wrangle in the sick-room. It is unpleasant, and may well become unseemly."

Not only are the Friendly Societies and the doctors indignant, but the chemists are convinced that they have been harshly treated. And when we come to the great crowd beyond, all those for whom the Act has been framed, we are met with a veritable storm of indignation. The Friendly Societies have been sold; the doctors have been sold; the chemists have been sold; and the great public has been sold as well.

This is not a text-book of the Insurance Act; indeed that is not my purpose. By taking a few typical illustrations, I shall be able to prove my case. And it is this. The failure of the Act is the failure of Mr. George, and Mr. George should bear the responsibility. If statesmen, when they fail, are allowed to ride off scot-free, we are merely making even greater trouble in the future a certainty. If Mr. George had had no earlier failure—and truth compels us to admit that his political life has been one long series of failures—the Insurance Act alone should disqualify him from meddling with our concerns in the future. Our charge against him with regard to the Act is not merely, however, that he has failed, but it is also that he has made so many

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pledges which have been broken, that we should be fools ever to trust him again. There was the 9*d.* for 4*d.* pledge. If Ananias had devoted himself to vote-catching, he could not have improved on that invention. I suppose that everyone knows now, and has known for some time, the 9*d.* for 4*d.* cry was a lie, and nothing but a lie. Even Mr. George himself has long since discarded it. And his supporters bitterly regret that it was ever made use of.

Mr. Philip Snowden denounced this cry on October 16, 1911:

"On Saturday night Mr. Lloyd George repeated once again the market-place, cheap-jack cry about the offer of 9*d.* for 4*d.* . . . As a matter of fact, it was not true to say that the bill was going to give 9*d.* of benefits for each 4*d.* contributed by the working-man."

If it was not true in 1911, it has been scandalously untrue in 1913, now that the Act is in force.

Mr. George's attitude with regard to the people's reception of his measure is pathetic. During the period when the public were paying, and before they were qualified to receive benefits, Mr. George turned round upon his critics and rent them with the assurance that everything would soon be changed. When the public received their benefits, they would be loud in

their praises of the Act, and the critics would be howled down. But now, for months the public have been receiving their benefits, such as they are, and their outcry against the Act merely increases. How does Mr. George explain this? It is Tory misrepresentation, he says. But to whom are these misrepresentations made? To the people who are receiving. They are paying their 4*d.*, and if they were receiving their 9*d.*, all the misrepresentations in the world would not convince them that they were getting a farthing less. The fact is that the people know more about the Act than those who speak on the Act, and they probably know a great deal more about the Act than the author of the Act himself. And if they had ever been consulted upon the Act, they would have been sharers in the responsibility for it. They were not consulted, and the whole burden of odium falls, and rightly falls, on Mr. George, the autocrat.

While we are dealing with wild promises and broken pledges, we should not omit the sanatoria treatment. Speaking at Birmingham on June 10, Mr. George said :

“What do we do in the bill? We open a new prospect for that worker. We plant all over Britain cities of refuge to which he can flee from this avenger of life. We are setting a million and a half aside for the purpose of

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building sanatoria throughout the country. There will be a million for maintaining them. The worker now will be able to command medical attendance. He will discover the disease in time. He will be taken to these institutions. In a few months the bulk of the cases that are taken in time are cured. He will be restored to his hearth, restored to his workshop, a fit, capable citizen, instead of being a wreck. Now, that is one thing we are doing." (Cheers.)

No wonder there were cheers. The audience did not know that Mr. George was doing nothing of the kind. The audience did not know that Mr. George was wholly wrong in his statement that "in a few months the bulk of the cases that are taken in time are cured." To my thinking, it is difficult to imagine anything more heartless than the wild hopes which Mr. George encouraged amongst consumptives with regard to what would happen under his Act.

In Germany sanatoria treatment for consumptives has been given for 20 years, and it is recognised that the treatment is lamentably unsuccessful. Official figures give the death-roll of those admitted into sanatoria as follows :

In 1 to $1\frac{1}{2}$ years . . .	25	per cent. die.
In 2 to $2\frac{1}{2}$ years . . .	28	" "
In 3 to $3\frac{1}{2}$ years . . .	55	" "
In 4 years	67	" "

Mr. George's speeches with regard to sanatoria benefit led the public to believe that a consumptive had a right of immediate entry to sanatoria and to immediate treatment. Recent decisions under the Act deny this, and even if it were admitted, the sanatoria themselves are not yet, in many cases, in existence. The public have been paying for, and are actually paying for, a benefit which the Government is unable to give.

A really shocking breach of faith is exposed in the matter of the denial of a free choice of doctor. The promises with regard to this were as specific as they could be.

At a special representative meeting of the British Medical Association held in the Examination Hall of the Royal College of Physicians and surgeons on June 1, 1911, Mr. George said :

"I am on all grounds in favour of a free choice of doctor. I think one of the essentials of curing is that the patient should have faith in his doctor ; and you cannot have faith in your doctor if you have doctors thrust on you whom you have not chosen, who for various reasons, most of them unsatisfactory, the patient may not believe in. Therefore I am myself strongly in favour of the system which I believe exists in two or three towns of this country in setting up a panel on which all qualified medical practi-

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tioners will be able to serve—not compelled to serve; no doctor will be obliged to take this work—but on which a qualified medical practitioner will be qualified to serve. . . .”
—(*Times*, June 2, 1911.)

In a letter to Sir Donald MacAlister, Mr. George wrote :

“It will be possible under the bill for Local Health Committees to make arrangements such as to admit of the ‘free choice of doctor’ by the person insured. There must, however, be some limit on this freedom of choice, as the insured person cannot be allowed to change his doctor every month or every three months. Moreover, there must be some method of securing a panel of doctors which would prevent work being done by members of the profession who had shown themselves unfit for the performance of what would become a very responsible duty.”—(*Times*, June 20, 1911.)

We set on the one side the promises and on the other their failure:

PROMISES

What Mr. Lloyd George said

“. . . Another thing established under the bill is this: He (the workman) can have the doctor of his own choice. . . . So we say to him, ‘Go

PERFORMANCES

Mr. Lloyd George has not only broken his own promises, but has broken the spirit, if not the letter, of the Insurance Act itself. (Sec. 15 (3).) He does not allow anyone claiming medical benefit to employ

to the doctor you believe in.' . . . What a fine thing it is to get the doctor you want and get somebody else to pay for him. . . ."—(Mr. Lloyd George at Whitefield's Tabernacle. *Daily News*, Oct. 16, 1911.)

What the Act itself says

"The regulations shall . . . allow any other persons . . . to make their own arrangements for receiving medical attendance . . . and the Committee shall . . . contribute . . . sums not exceeding . . . the amounts which the Committee would otherwise have expended in providing medical benefit for them. . . ." (Section 15 (3).)

What the Official Medical Ticket says

"If you are arranging with the Insurance Committee to obtain your treatment from a doctor not on the list, and wish to claim a contribution towards the cost of the treatment, you must send this ticket to the Insurance Committee."

any doctor outside the panel unless in very exceptional cases; and so "the absolute right of free choice" is taken away.

Mr. Lloyd George, addressing the Advisory Committee on January 2, 1913, said:

"... It has been assumed by a certain number of medical men—not by the whole—that the insured person has got an absolute indefeasible right to make arrangements apart from the Local Insurance Committees or the National Insurance Commissioners with any doctor he likes, whether he is on or off the panel. We had to issue a notice the other day to say that this was a completely erroneous idea. . . . —(*Times*, January 3, 1913.)

For those who groan under the Insurance Act, who are indignant over its hardships and injustices, and who feel disposed to blame both parties in the State for the evil that has befallen them, we set out a list of some of the amendments which the Unionist members attempted to carry. We claim that it is as

much to our credit that we did everything in our power to obtain these amendments as it is to the discredit of Mr. George and his Government that they refused them and out-voted us.

Some of the amendments which Unionist members proposed and which were accepted by the Government :

(1) An amendment allowing sick pay to exceed two-thirds of the wages.

The Government proposed to cut down the sick pay. The Unionists, who were supposed to have no sympathy with the working classes, realised that when men were sick their expenses, as likely as not, would exceed those wages upon which they were able to live when they were well. Mr. Lloyd George's bill proposed to restrict sick pay to two-thirds of the wages only.

The nation should be grateful to the Unionists for having carried an amendment to so unfair a proposal.

(2) An amendment allowing the total sick pay from all clubs, &c., to exceed the wages.

The Government proposed to prevent any man from receiving from all his insurances a sum that was greater than the amount of his wages. There are many prudent workmen who insure in several clubs against the loss they sustain when sick. Had the Unionists

not carried this amendment, very grave injustices would have followed, quite apart from the denial to a man of the receipt of that for which he had paid.

(3) Another amendment was to allow sickness benefit to be paid where board and lodging were given.

An incredibly harsh proposal was contained in the bill which Mr. Lloyd George introduced. Any domestic servant who was provided with board and lodging by her employer could receive no sick pay, unless she was, first of all, turned out of the house.

A large section of the community consists of domestic servants, and many humane employers will be grateful to the Unionists for this just proposition.

(4) Another amendment which the Unionists succeeded in carrying was to allow sick pay and disablement benefit to be given in respect of diseases arising during the waiting periods.

The Government's proposal was to refuse to give these benefits, if the illness arose within the waiting period: from any disease which existed during the first six months in the case of sick pay, or two years in the case of disablement after the commencement of the Act.

The Unionists realised that sick persons

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and disabled persons could not be healthy or sound at their own will merely to gratify Mr. Lloyd George, and they determined that the needs of these persons should not be denied by the harsh scheme which the Chancellor of the Exchequer proposed.

They also carried an amendment which provided that medical and surgical appliances should be added to the medical benefit.

Some of the amendments which Unionist members proposed and which were rejected by the Government :

The Unionists moved an amendment to make sick pay payable from the first day of illness, instead of the fourth day. Why should a man who has insured against sickness be condemned to be sick and to suffer the loss that sickness brings for three whole days? Is he to make quite sure that he is sick, or is he to make Mr. Lloyd George quite sure that he is sick, or is it simply a question of meanness, or a lack of sympathy for sickness? The great Friendly Societies have paid on the first day, and many of them still do. They do not proclaim their beneficent scheme as being a glorified measure of National Insurance. They simply, quietly, thoroughly, quickly, and most effectively do their work. To this amendment of the Unionist Party Mr. Lloyd George would not give way, and

the Radical Government would not give way, and every man and woman who pays has to be sick for three days, and suffer the loss, before they can get any benefit at all.

Another important amendment, moved by the Unionists and refused by the Radicals, was to allow members of Friendly Societies to pay their own contributions direct to their own societies, instead of having them deducted from their wages. One cannot imagine why this amendment was refused, unless it was out of the desire to deliberately undermine the machinery of the Friendly Societies, and break down that friendly society spirit, which is something very different to the spirit of the Insurance Act.

The Unionists in the House of Commons made a prolonged fight to secure a real insurance for the Post Office Deposit Contributors. In this they failed. The Government was inflexible. The Post Office Contributors are the least happily placed of all those who come under the Act.

The Unionists believe that the measure of success of an Act of Parliament is to be found in the test as to whether it gives the greatest relief to those who most needed relief. The Radical Government, however, in their treatment of Post Office Contributors, showed that they declined to be the poor man's friend, and

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were prepared to hit a man simply because he was down.

Another most important amendment which the Unionist Party moved, was to try to secure sickness and disablement benefits after 70 to all who are not eligible for Old Age Pensions. This, again, was a case of succouring the most needy. The position of persons over 70 in the Act to-day, now that the Radicals out-voted the Unionists' amendment, is nothing less than a scandal. Old folk may for some reason or other have lost their votes. This may appear to be an uncharitable explanation of the Radical action in the matter, but it is the only one that is apparent.

Other equally important amendments which the Unionists proposed, and which were rejected, were as follows :

An amendment to reduce the waiting period in sickness from 26 to 13 weeks, and to reduce the waiting period from disablement from 104 to 52 weeks. Until these amendments are carried, the Act will be fraught with grave injustice, and will inflict upon hundreds of thousands of persons unmerited misery and suffering.

Another amendment was that all those over 18 years of age should be entitled to full benefits, and not the special reduced benefits

provided in the bill for unmarried persons under 21.

Two other amendments which would have been extremely helpful to organisations which had carried on insurance work long before the Radical Government even dreamt of it, were as follows :

The amendment to allow present members of Friendly Societies to have immediate benefits under the Act, instead of waiting six months for sick pay and two years disablement benefit. The Unionist Party felt that, seeing that these Friendly Society members had in many cases been paying for many years, it was the height of injustice that they should have to start a new period of waiting, and be precisely on the same footing as persons who had never made any provision for themselves at all.

The last amendment that we need notice was to reduce the members necessary to form an Approved Society from 5000 to 1000.

We are all aware that there were in existence large numbers of small societies which were admirably conducted, and fully able to meet their liabilities. The harsh demand that only a society with a membership of 5000 would be able to become an Approved Society, dealt cruelly with a large number of deserving institutions.

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We do not suggest that these lists, even if all the amendments became law, would make the Act flawless. The National Insurance Act must be overhauled from end to end, and the people, who were not consulted before the Act became law, must be called in as welcome experts to advise and to help. Inquiries should be made by experts in every trade, and amongst every section of the community, not merely as to the effect of the present Act, but as to the real desires of the people, so that they may be embodied, where they are practicable, in an amending Act. To those who, for party reasons, would prefer that an amendment should be made by the present Government, we would point out why we think this is undesirable. The mere fact that there is necessity to reconstruct a house only a few months after it has been completed, is a vote of censure on the architect. Surely it would be better to call in a new firm, who would be more anxious to make the structure sound and safe than to consider the personal feelings and emotions of the man who was responsible for the faulty premises. And even beyond this, Mr. George and the present Government have forfeited the confidence of the voluntary thrift societies. The part which those organisations must play in the amending Act will be an important one, and it would be unreasonable to ask them once again to give their invaluable advice to men

who have broken faith with them, and have done their utmost to undermine, if not actually to destroy, them.

On June 24, 1913, an amending Act was introduced by the Chancellor. It is scarcely reassuring to those who suffer under a variety of injustices that this Act should have been brought in under the ten-minutes' rule. However, in later stages, the Government, no doubt, will offer a larger opportunity for criticism. Unionists will welcome the provision which gives medical benefit to those over 65. The fact that this should be conceded is a tribute to them. They have fought hard for it for months.

At present no good purpose would be served by criticising in detail the proposals of the amending Act, but it may be permitted to us to point out some of the greatest hardships which that Act ignores.

The wrongs of Deposit Contributors have been left untouched. The four separate Commissions are still unremoved. Sick pay is still withheld during the first three days. The societies have not received back the provision of medical benefit.

It may be that the provisions of the amending Act will be approved of as far as they go; but if Mr. George thinks they go far enough, he must have a better opinion of his Insurance Act than anyone else.

CHAPTER XI

AMERICAN MARCONIS AND AFTER

WHEN we find Mr. George buying American Marconi shares, we are compelled to form a judgment upon the transactions from two points of view. Mr. George is a Cabinet Minister, but he is also Mr. George. As a Cabinet Minister his conduct must conform to the traditions of the public service, and as Mr. George said, it must be consistent with the principles which, in the past, he has been good enough to lay down for others.

There is no doubt that he did buy American Marconis. He himself has said so. He bought them on April 17, 1912. He and the Chief Whip, the Master of Elibank, bought 2000 between them on that date, and bought them from His Majesty's Attorney-General.

It was very fortunate that they did buy on the 17th, because on the 18th, by a happy coincidence, the American Company formally agreed to issue the shares, and in consequence the price jumped up. And the price still went up, with the result that Mr. George was able,

on April 20, to sell on behalf of himself and the Radical Chief Whip, 1000 out of the 2000 shares, at the price of $3\frac{5}{8}$.

Now, as he had bought those shares on the 17th at £2, and sold half of them on the 20th at $3\frac{5}{8}$ per share, Mr. George must have accounted himself a very fortunate person.

The Attorney-General seems to have had control of the other half of the 2000 shares, which were held in the joint interest of Mr. George and the Chief Whip. And Sir Rufus Isaacs was busy selling too. He was able to dispose of 357 of Mr. George's shares and 357 of the Chief Whip's. And he sold them—these shares which had been bought for £2 apiece—he sold them at an average price of £3, 6s. 6d. So far Mr. George had made a promising start as a speculator. He had begun with 1000 shares, half of the 2000 shares which he and the Chief Whip held together, and which an obliging Attorney-General had placed at their disposal. Of his 1000 shares there had been sold 857, and they had been sold at so good a price that he had made a profit of £743, and still retained 143 shares which cost him nothing.

Unhappily Mr. George was not satisfied. No more was the Chief Whip. On May 22 they bought on joint account 3000 more American Marconi shares, and they paid—or

they ought to have paid but they didn't— $2\frac{5}{8}$ for them.

After crediting Mr. George for the shares which he had sold, and debiting him for his share of the 3000 shares which had been bought, he owed his brokers £3486. This was apparently a big sum for him to find, and it was not till the October following that he paid one-third of it, namely, £1162, to his brokers, and was seemingly compelled to borrow the rest of the amount due, from his brokers at a rate of interest varying from $5\frac{1}{4}$ per cent. to 7 per cent.

Up to the time when the Marconi Committee's report was issued, Mr. George's shares were still with his brokers. They were held as security for the amount due to them, and we have not been informed as to whether the loan has yet been discharged.

Meanwhile, the Radical Chief Whip went further and did worse. On April 18, 1912, he bought 2500 American Marconi shares at $3\frac{1}{4}$, and May 14 of the same year he bought another 500, at $2\frac{7}{8}$. These purchases were made by the Radical Chief Whip, so we are told, on behalf of the Liberal Party funds.

Mr. George was the Finance Minister of the British Empire; Sir Rufus Isaacs was the Attorney-General; and the Master of Elibank was the Chief Whip of the Radical Party.

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Now, what was the American Marconi Company in which these distinguished Ministers interested themselves?

There was an English Marconi Company and an American Marconi Company. It is important to see whether there was any connection between the two. First as to the English Company. Mr. Godfrey Isaacs, who happened to be the brother of the Attorney-General, was and is the Managing-Director of the English Company. It was he who opened negotiations on behalf of his Company with the British Government for the construction of a chain of long-distance wireless stations round the Empire. The negotiations began in March 1910, and it was not until March 7, 1912, that the general terms of his Company's tender were accepted by the Post Office.

And that is where another Minister, Mr. Herbert Samuel, comes in.

Before March 7, 1912, however, important financial events had happened. On December 18, 1911, the Post Office and Mr. Godfrey Isaacs practically came to an agreement as to the chief terms on which the Marconi Company would undertake the erection of the wireless stations. The English Marconi shares rose rapidly in sympathy, and it is clear that the market anticipated the ultimate acceptance of the tender, which was not reached till March 7.

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Now, as it must then have been in contemplation to issue on the British market a large number of the American Marconi shares, which was actually done, it was important that there should be a boom in the English shares. How was this to be attained? We make no suggestions, but surely it will be obvious that if it became known in the City that British Cabinet Ministers were buying American Marconis, so distinguished a lead would in all likelihood be followed.

Let us see what happened. Two days after the acceptance of the English Marconi tender for the Imperial chain, Mr. Godfrey Isaacs, the General Manager of the English Company, and Mr. Marconi sailed for New York. Their business was to get the American Company on its legs, and they achieved this. On March 16 there was a banquet in New York in honour of Mr. Marconi, and curiously enough the English Attorney-General sent a wireless congratulatory telegram, which was read out at that banquet :

"Please congratulate Marconi and my brother on the successful development of the marvellous enterprise. I wish them all success in New York, and hope that by the time they come back the Coal Strike will be finished."

Why the Coal Strike? And why the telegram at all?

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In New York, negotiations were hurried forward, and an agreement was signed on March 10, 1912, between the English Marconi Company and the American Company, the English Company contracting, subject to the licence of the British Postmaster-General, to erect in or near London a high power-station for the purpose of wireless communication from America to places in and beyond London, and from England to places in and beyond America.

Now, what is the association between the English Company and the American Company? The American Company was founded by the English Company. Until April 1912 the English Company held the majority of its shares and nominated three of its directors. The financial expenditure of the American Company was initiated and in the main carried through by the English Company, and the patents belonging to the American Company were the same as those of the English Company. If the English Company succeeded, it was less likely that the American Company would fail. If the English Company failed, it could only be by a miracle that the American Company would succeed. The fact that the English Company had the prestige of an accepted tender with the English Government, would, as far as it went, and we have no doubt that this fact did go a long way in

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New York, be a help in the formation of the American Company. Sir Rufus Isaac's telegram to New York, coming from the Attorney-General, would be a new factor making for success, and the knowledge subsequently bruited abroad that Cabinet Ministers were putting money into American Marconis would surely be another bull point. And a very useful bull point too, when a considerable proportion of the American Company's capital was to be found in the British market.

Let us deal with another class of considerations. When the Attorney-General, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and the Radical Chief Whip put money into American Marconis, there was no concluded contract between the English Company and the British Government.

Speaking in the House of Commons, on October 11, 1912, the Postmaster-General denied that he had signed a contract on March 7. His actual words were:

"I signed no contract. The Marconi Company put in a tender in general terms. A letter was written by the Post Office accepting the tender upon which a contract was subsequently to be based."

What does this amount to? The Attorney-General had interested himself in the American Company, which was undeniably dependent

for its success on a similar British Company, and as Attorney-General he might be called upon to advise his own Government as to whether a contract with the English Company was a contract which they should enter into. The Chancellor of the Exchequer might similarly have been called upon to budget for the monies to be paid under that contract, and the Radical Chief Whip would, if a division were challenged, find it to be his duty to rally the forces of the Government in the lobby in support of the contract. Fortunately, none of these events actually did happen; but surely it was a risk which no British Minister should ever take.

Everyone does foolish things at times, even the cleverest of us. These American Marconi speculations were gravely objectionable, and public forgiveness will largely depend on the motives and the intentions of the speculators. The Attorney-General, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and the Chief Whip of the Radical Party were living on terms of the closest personal intimacy at the time when the speculations were made; and Mr. Godfrey Isaacs, the Attorney-General's brother, by reason of his position as Managing Director of the British Company, had information which no other living man possessed. That information was conveyed to the Attorney-General, and by him

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to the Chancellor and the Chief Whip. A bitter controversy centres on the point as to whether, as the result of this privileged information, the speculators bought at a better price than the outside public. We think that this undoubtedly was so, but the point is really immaterial. The grave charge against them is that they should ever have bought at all. They might or might not have been under an obligation to Mr. Godfrey Isaacs, but once having an interest in the Company itself, it is impossible to believe that they could be free agents in any developments that might subsequently arise.

Both Sir Rufus Isaacs and Mr. George, in the debate which took place in the House on June 18, 1913, made frank admission that they ought not to have bought American Marconis. Sir Rufus Isaacs said:

"I need scarcely tell the House that I have given this matter very careful consideration before I made this statement, and I say solemnly and sincerely that in what I have stated, I think, in plain terms, I agree, and will put it in language which, at any rate, is not too kindly to myself, that it was a mistake to purchase those shares."

On the same occasion Mr. Lloyd George admitted:

"If you will, I acted thoughtlessly, I acted

carelessly, I acted mistakenly; but I acted innocently, I acted openly, and I acted honestly."

Who are these men who acted mistakenly and thoughtlessly? The one is the Attorney-General, a man of brilliant intellect, the other is the Chancellor of the Exchequer, upon whose judgment the finance of the whole country depends.

We are reluctant to pursue harshly the question of motives and good faith, but truth compels us to observe that even if Sir Rufus Isaacs and Mr. George admitted that the transaction itself was regrettable, their conduct in connection with the matter was even more so. Rumour had been busy over the whole business, and a discussion took place in the House on October 11, 1912. On that day Mr. Herbert Samuel moved for the appointment of a Select Committee to investigate the circumstances connected with the negotiation and completion of the contract, and to report on the desirability of the contract. In the course of the discussion, Sir Rufus Isaacs and Mr. George spoke. They made no disclosure whatever of their interest in American Marconi shares. Indeed, they used language which at least colourably suggested that they had no interest in any Marconi shares at all.

Mr. George said :

"I want to know what these rumours are. If the Hon. gentleman has any charge to make against the Government as a whole, or against individual members of it, I think it ought to be stated openly. The reason why the Government wanted a frank discussion before going to Committee was because we wanted to bring here these rumours—these sinister rumours—that have been passed from one foul lip to the other behind the backs of the House."

The Attorney-General stated :

"Never from the beginning, when the shares were 14s. or £9, have I had one single transaction with the shares of that Company. I am speaking not only for myself, but I am also speaking on behalf, I know, of both my Rt. Hon. friends, the Postmaster-General and the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who, in some way or other in some of the articles, have been brought into this matter."

Had frank disclosure of interest in American Marconi shares been made on October 11, the nation would have looked less unkindly upon the transaction. Sir Rufus Isaacs, in his speech on the June 18, 1913, referred to this. He admitted :

"I think that the course that we took on October 11 was a mistaken course. I think the House is entitled, and when I say the

House I am not referring to any party or section of a party, I think that all members of the House are entitled to get from each other, not only from Ministers, but from each other as members of the House of Commons, a frank statement in answer to any question that may be raised in the House. And I say to the House as a whole, dealing with this matter, that the course which we pursued, and which I will explain in a moment in more detail, was a course which I think now, and by the light of all that has happened, was a mistaken one."

But the suppression of the fact that they were interested in American Marconis did not end with the House of Commons. The Select Committee had been appointed, and neither Sir Rufus Isaacs nor Mr. George communicated the actual facts to the Chairman of that Committee, although they did take into their confidence two of the most partisan members of that body.

Nor did they even tell their own Prime Minister until January of the present year. Then on March 19, 1913, the action for libel against the *Matin* newspaper was tried. We were told that the main object for which this suit was brought was to enable Ministers to explain exactly how matters stood. And again there was suppression of facts. Nothing what-

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ever was said of the later transactions by Mr. Lloyd George in respect of the 3000 shares bought by him on May 22, or of his sale of the 1000 on April 20.

One is left to wonder as to whether the facts would ever have come out at all had it not been for the production of the books of the stockbroker who had done the business. The transactions themselves were gravely objectionable, but we are compelled to infer from the manner in which they were kept secret that the persons who entered into the speculations must themselves have realised how very objectionable they were.

These, then, very briefly are the facts of the Marconi case as at present they are known. Whether there are more revelations to come, only the future can tell. The public will itself pass judgment on the Ministers involved. If the public judges Mr. George by the standards which he himself set up, he will be condemned indeed.

Let us refer to the terms of the amendment to the Address which Mr. George moved on December 10, 1900 (page 53). On that occasion Mr. George attempted the downfall of Mr. Chamberlain, and failed contemptibly. If, however, he is himself judged by the very requirements for public purity which he him-

self pronounced to be necessary, he will be condemned out of hand.

From another standpoint his case is nauseating. For years he has never wearied in denouncing unearned increment. His great gospel is that men should live on what they earn, and that land which appreciates in value should be specially taxed by the State to the extent of that increased value. But if there be unearned increment in land, there is unearned increment in other forms of property. Indeed, Mr. Asquith laid stress on this when, on June 24, 1909, he declared that :

"It is to some extent a fact that there is an element of unearned value in other forms of property besides land. . . . That is an argument in favour of taking it in other cases also. His [the Chancellor's] opponents have made him a present of a suggestion which may possibly fructify."

Seemingly, Mr. George has got tired of taxing other people's unearned increment, and is anxious to acquire a little for himself by means of speculation ; but if unearned increment be bad in other people, it is also bad in Mr. George. What, we wonder, will Mr. George have to say on the subject when he takes the platform. His long-promised land campaign can be nothing but an attack on unearned increment. Will he still pursue

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it? In his own deal he has lost : some stockbroker has acquired unearned increment in respect of Mr. George's American Marconi transactions. Will Mr. George pursue that stockbroker with special legislation to make him disgorge his profit to the State? Perhaps the stockbroker would retort :

“What, supposing Mr. George had made a profit instead of a loss, would Mr. George have surrendered his profit to the State?”

We wonder.

CHAPTER XII

THE PENALTY OF FAILURE

FAILURE is always costly. Someone has to pay for it. In business the Failure himself pays ; with statesmen—the public. A profit and loss account showing what Mr. George's career has cost the nation would be an eye-opener. It is impossible of achievement, however. We cannot send auditors into every home in the land.

Furthermore, in politics, cause and effect are difficult to trace fully. The class-war which opened on the political platform did not stop there. The class bitterness which Mr. George engendered in Limehouse, and in his later attacks on the Lords, burst into flame anew during our great strikes. Lesser leaders picked up the weapons which Mr. George had laid aside.

The fact that those strikes were directly due to distressful conditions of hours and wages, and the increasing cost of living is, in itself, a condemnation of Mr. George as a social regenerator. The astounding budget had left the masses poorer.

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As a man, we believe that Mr. George is charming. We hear that he is kindness itself. As a public man he is impossible. We cannot afford him.

He is a great demagogue and nothing more. And no demagogue has ever succeeded in British politics. He inspires momentary confidence with rhetoric, and strangles it in office. He promises us an earthly paradise, and leaves us in the wilderness. Even in his speech at the Marconi Luncheon, on July 1, 1913, he returned to his old game :

“My Right Honourable friend [Sir Rufus Isaacs] and I have been assailed by a hideous monster that sought our lives. Not by our own right arm, but with the help of friends, we have slaughtered it; *and unless I am mistaken, out of the prostrate form will come something that will sweeten the lives of millions who hitherto have tasted nothing but the bitterness and dust of the world.*”

What has happened to the “rare and refreshing fruit” ? Is that part of the diet of “bitterness and dust” ?

Are we not getting very tired of this confidence-trick man ?

And if Mr. George fails dismally in great causes, what is his record in details ? Have we ever known an important Minister who has been a tenth part as inaccurate and

unreliable? Surely we have not forgotten the case of the gentle Shepherd or the lease of Mr. Gorringe—or the hundreds of other exposures of false facts and figures upon which bitter speeches were built.

All these incidents stab confidence and convince us that Mr. George is unworthy of a renewal of trust. But there is an outstanding peril in Mr. George greater than any or all of these. On the platform he is a democrat; in office he is the veriest autocrat. He pleads for the people's will to win the people's votes, and once he has got them, it is Lloyd George's will and the people cease to count.

It is not our intention to be ruled by any one man in this country. Certainly not by Mr. Lloyd George.

He has had great chances, and has only achieved an abysmal failure. And he leaves us to pay for it while he dreams of a new millennium.

Let us secure our own safety in the warning of the Quaker proverb :

“ If thy friend deceive thee once,
Shame on him.
If he deceive thee again,
Shame on *thee* ! ”

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